

**EVALUATION OF THE USAID PROFESSIONAL
MEDIA PROGRAM IN CENTRAL AND
EASTERN EUROPE**

**A PROGRAM IMPLEMENTED BY THE INTERNATIONAL
RESEARCH AND EXCHANGES BOARD IN PARTNERSHIP WITH
FREEDOM HOUSE**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Report is a program evaluation of the Professional Media Program. The ProMedia Program is conducted pursuant to an \$8.0 million cooperative agreement awarded to a consortium of three American private voluntary organization in September of 1995.¹ The Program is currently managed by the International Research and Exchange Board (IREX) as primary implementor and Freedom House in ten countries of Central and Eastern Europe. The evaluation was conducted in September 1998 and involved headquarters visits and trips to five ProMedia countries Slovakia, Romania, Ukraine, Hungary and Croatia.

ProMedia's stated objective is to "enhance the capabilities of media entities in the CEE to become independent and sustainable institutions". This is intended to support USAID's strategic objective that is: "Increased, better informed citizen participation in public policy decision making". To accomplish its purpose, ProMedia provides business management and marketing support, journalism education, association building, grants to indigenous organizations, help in television and radio programming, co-production support and advice on the establishment of a supportive legal and regulatory environment.

The first year of program operations was marked with problems. Difficulties included slow start-up and a lengthy and unproductive process of studies and field assessments, a cumbersome work planning system, poor coordination among implementing partners, fundamental confusion with regard to roles, functions and relationships and difficulty in finding experienced field advisors. In addition, one member of the managing consortium dropped out and another member ! Freedom House ! restructured its role and function. The disadvantages of a Washington based management approach became obvious. USAID overseas offices and embassies ! wanted more operational involvement, Washington based management and decision making was cumbersome and reporting, work planning and communications were difficult. Most importantly, highly differentiated and complex country conditions necessitated senior, experienced long term Resident Advisors and a field driven management structure. As a consequence of these factors and at insistent urging from USAID/ENI, in the summer of 1996 IREX installed a new management team, decided to employ senior well paid media professionals as Resident Advisors, converted to a more rapid country planning process, and delegated greater management responsibility to the field.

The current ProMedia program is characterized by a high degree of country specific differentiation that makes across the board impact measurement very difficult, a relatively high degree of Embassy interest and involvement, and heavy dependence on the senior experience and capacity of field staff. The involvement of the US government in media strengthening is seen as controversial by some American media organizations, though this concern is in general not shared by media groups in Central Europe.

With regard to overall impact, the evaluation team found that improved management was a high priority, that there is a strong demand for the types of programs ProMedia provides, that individual ProMedia activities are generally effective, that interventions are most effective when they are sequentially linked, that the Program is not viewed as politically intrusive and that there are potential complementarities with other USAID programs.

¹ The cooperative agreement has been amended twice and increased to \$19 million over 4 years. Large programs for Bosnia and Serbia have been added.

With respect to basic strategy, the evaluation found that the ProMedia programs tend to be activity driven and have a strong centrifugal tendency. The country-based approach has led to a diffusion of program identity. While media assessments have been done in most countries, the lengthy, in-depth comprehensive approach that was originally envisioned was not followed. The Report notes that the revised approach relies on the Resident Advisor as the source of technical strength and that the current roster of advisors appears exceptionally well experienced and qualified.

Despite initial resistance, ProMedia managers have used USAID's results planning framework. This process has helped clarify goals and priorities but has had limited benefit as a management tool. Finding useful indicators and measuring results has been particularly problematic because of the diversity and country specific nature of the program, the fact that results are often qualitative and the inherent difficulty of measuring improvements in institutional capacity. As a consequence, comparative analysis is difficult.

With regard to program results, although the information is anecdotal, there is a strong body of evidence that ProMedia has been effective in working with and through media associations and that the management support in the form of training, workshops, study/training tours to the US, lecture programs and targeted management consultations and technical assistance have been instrumental in improving the capacity of media organizations. The geographic mix and media (TV, radio, press) composition seems generally appropriate. The media law component of the program leverages private sector money and there is broad agreement that the technical quality of the work by Covington and Burling has been excellent. However, a central issue is whether a more strategic and proactive effort should be made to do more than advise and build legal capacity or whether an effort should be made to deliberately concentrate on building the ability of indigenous advocacy organization to lobby for reforms.

The report raises issues regarding the ad hoc nature of management workshops, the difficulty of measuring the benefit of study/training tours and the need to give greater emphasis to sustainability and exit planning.

The evaluation finds that the management start-up problems have been constructively addressed by IREX although some structural problems based in the complex four part management structure still remain.

The quality of consortium relations has been mixed. Anticipated synergies from mixing organizations with different comparative advantages have not been realized and the validity of the consortium concept appears to be fundamentally flawed. The dispute between IREX and Freedom House has not damaged individual country programs although difficult relations between the two has involved an indeterminate opportunity cost.

Principal conclusions are that: the building and strengthening of an independent media is of critical importance to progress toward democratic governance; the decision to convert the program to a "field driven" approach was correct and needs to be sustained and if possible strengthened; deviations from the original design set forth in the RFA have in general been well justified adaptations; country based planning should be enhanced and a greater effort needs to be made to develop a clear integrating strategy for each country program; more should be done to integrate lessons learned and develop a

stronger central analytical capacity; a simultaneous effort should be made to shape the ProMedia program so that it is more *programmatic* in concept, design and application; business training and improved management should emerge more clearly as the primary focus area; association building should be the second primary focus area; greater and more explicit attention needs to be paid to the design of sustainable assistance strategies; long term program design should concentrate on indigenous capacity and ultimate termination of a direct USAID assistance effort; the Cooperative Agreement mechanism should be maintained and the importance of a consortium arrangement should be reduced in the next RFA.

Specific important recommendations include: enhanced country based strategic planning, an effort to shape the Program so that it is more *programmatic* in concept, design and application; the investment of modest additional resources in strengthening analytical capacity and organizational learning; first priority to media business training; second priority to association building; continued use of the results framework; the need for exit planning and the design of sustainable assistance strategies. The operation of the USAID management structure should continue to be simplified and long-term program design should concentrate on indigenous capacity and ultimate termination of a direct USAID assistance effort.

EVALUATION ON THE USAID PROFESSIONAL MEDIA PROGRAM (ProMedia) IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

I. INTRODUCTION

This Report is a program evaluation of the Professional Media Program (ProMedia Program) managed by the International Research and Exchange Board (IREX) as primary implementor and Freedom House in ten countries of Central and Eastern Europe.² The Report is divided into six Sections that address the *purpose* of the evaluation, pertinent *background* and contextual information, a description of *methodology* employed, core *findings*, *conclusions* and *recommendations*. Attachments to this Report include brief country studies for those countries visited during the evaluation, a direct response to the list of questions enumerated in the Scope of Work and information regarding individuals interviewed and Reports and studies that were consulted.

II. PURPOSE OF EVALUATION

The purpose of this evaluation is set forth in the Scope of Work. In summary, it was anticipated that the study would:

Briefly describe the principle activities carried out under the ProMedia Program. (See body of Report and country report at attachment 1.)

Assess progress and impact to date. (See Section V., Findings.)

Provide Recommendations regarding future directions and activities. (See Section VII, Conclusions and Section VIII, Recommendations.)

Comment on the extent to which the development of the independent sector is contributing to improving citizen's participation in the democratic process. (See Section V, Findings and Section VI, Issues for Discussion.)

The Scope of Work included a list of questions that the final Report should address. These forms have influenced the content and structure of the report and deal with program content and implementation, program management and program monitoring. (See Section V., Findings.)

The primary focus of this evaluation report is on crosscutting program characteristics and issues *not* on specific activities or individual country programs. These are discussed to the extent that they illustrate larger programmatic themes.

² The countries are Albania, Belarus, Bulgaria, Hungary, Croatia, Serbia/Montenegro, Slovakia, Ukraine, Romania and Bosnia. Throughout this Report, term "media" is used generically to refer to all traditional mechanisms for distributing news, information and entertainment i.e. radio, television, print and to a growing extent, information carried on the internet.

III. APPROACH³

This evaluation was conducted in September 1998. The evaluation team consisted of a team leader with prior management consulting and USAID (United States Agency for International Development) experience and two media specialists with extensive knowledge of Central and Eastern Europe. The evaluation work was conducted in five stages:

Team planning and issue identification, in Washington including preparation of an interview guideline designed to address the issues raised in the Scope of Work in a comprehensive and systematic manner.

Washington interviews with officials at USAID/ENI (Europe and Newly Independent States) and staff of IREX, Freedom House and several other associated organizations.

A three week field trip to 5 countries in Central and Eastern Europe: Slovakia, Ukraine, Hungary, Romania and Croatia.

Team consultation and preparation of a draft report.

Presentation to USAID followed by comments from USAID/ENI, IREX, Freedom House and USAID missions and preparation of the final report based on those comments.⁴

This evaluation was carried out under an unusually compressed time frame. Pre-planning time was limited, country visits were brief and the report itself was prepared to meet a tight deadline. While most of the primary issues have been addressed, a few of the questions in the scope of work have not received as much attention as might have been desirable without time pressures. In addition, the evaluation team did not visit Bosnia, Albania, Bulgaria, Belarus or Serbia. While the evaluation team believes that it surveyed a sufficient number of ProMedia activities and countries to support the findings and recommendations set forth in this Report, it is important to emphasize that the conditions

³ Technically, this is a “process” evaluation rather than an “outcome” evaluation, although outcomes are certainly discussed. An outcome evaluation tends to focus solely on what has happened. A process evaluation on the other hand is concerned with answering the “how” of what has happened, or the “what is going on here” question.

⁴ In general, the evaluation team has been able to incorporate the corrections and accommodate the comments, concerns and criticisms of the initial draft that were received from USAID, IREX and all USAID missions that were visited. By and large these comments supported the core findings and conclusions set forth in the draft, although they raised a number of thoughtful issues that the evaluation team has attempted to address in the second iteration. However, Freedom House had a strong and very negative reaction to the draft and felt in particular that the criticisms of Freedom House performance and their management of the Romania program were inaccurate and erroneous and that the assessment of impact was deficient. Freedom House has asked for extensive substantive changes in the findings and conclusions of the Report. While the team has been able to correct factual errors and has added several sections dealing with application of the results framework, cost effectiveness and program impact, and has extensively edited the Romanian country report, the team has not been able to incorporate the substantive and comprehensive re-structuring that Freedom House has requested for two reasons. First, the evaluation team has reviewed its findings, conclusions and recommendations and believes that on the basis of the information provided, they are fundamentally valid. Secondly, the team believes that Freedom House has misinterpreted the overall thrust of this evaluation and overreacted to material that was intended to be analytical but not critical. The Team believes that if it were to totally recast the evaluation to answer the extensive and detailed list of Freedom House concerns — as Freedom House has requested — it would result in a distorting bias that would undermine the validity of the central findings.

in countries not visited might alter these conclusions.

The Scope of Work for this evaluation is at Attachment 4. The questions set forth in that Scope are the central questions addressed in this study, although the order and nomenclature are somewhat different.

The guiding analytical perspective for this evaluation is programmatic, rather than functional or geographic. Thus, the findings, conclusions and recommendations in the body of this study deal with crosscutting program issues and structural and managerial aspects of the ProMedia Program rather than country specific or activity specific matters. To root the evaluation in real experience and avoid an excessively generic tone, the team prepared brief country reports detailing country conditions and the content of the ProMedia effort in each locale. These reports identify specific issues and in some cases set forth specific recommendations. The summary findings in the body of the Report are designed to derive from and mirror the component findings of the country studies.

In preliminary discussions with USAID/ENI/DGSR staff, it was emphasized that this evaluation should be forward looking and attempt to develop insights that would be useful as the program expands and matures, and to USAID in general as it thinks about a potential role in building strong media in developing and transitional countries. Media strengthening is a relatively new area for USAID and, as could be expected, the ProMedia program has faced start-up difficulties. While these need to be identified to the extent that they are germane to the future, it was agreed that re-hashing mistakes simply for the sake of finding blame was not productive.

Although scopes of work for evaluations establish the “marching orders” and identify the deliverables, program evaluations involve the application of an external set of standards, expectations or performance criteria to a complex set of activities that involve organizational, technical, philosophical and behavioral dimensions. This is especially pertinent in looking at democracy and governance programs because of the difficulty of constructing fully reliable and convincing results frameworks. In assessing the implementation and impact of the ProMedia program, the evaluation team has applied six important performance standards that are explicitly or implicitly present throughout this report. These are:

1. The existence of clarity and general consensus with regard to program objectives.
2. Self-learning capacity and an ability to figure out what works — a capacity to be adaptive, flexible and responsive to individual country situations and to changing conditions and opportunities.
3. The existence of an integrating strategic framework that provides guidance and coherence to the individual components and helps managers make day to day decisions.
4. The technical and managerial competence of the primary program decision makers.
5. The existence of attitudes and systems that ensure reasonably open, interactive and constructive communication.
6. Compatibility between the management structure and operating framework and program goals and content.

The concluding section of the report includes a brief assessment based on these criteria.

IV. BACKGROUND

This Section discusses prior developments and antecedent material that has had a direct or indirect bearing on program performance, the current shape of the program and issues identified in the evaluation.

1. International Media Fund

Prior to 1995, USAID assistance to media development in Central Europe was in the form of pass-through funding to USIA (or USIS overseas) and a grant to the International Media Fund (IMF). The IMF had been established as an independent non-profit organization in 1990 following an initiative of then Secretary of State James Baker to assist in the development of the media in Central and Eastern Europe. The Fund provided direct assistance to radio and television stations and print publications and was active in the establishment of several media resource centers. An important understanding was that the Fund would operate with total independence and without oversight or interference from the US government. By 1995 USAID/ENI had decided that a more direct, targeted, programmatic approach to media strengthening was called for and that this would necessitate greater direct USAID involvement in management and operations of the media program. In view of this anticipated change in fundamental approach, the Board of IMF decided that continuation of the media program would be inconsistent with its basic charter and a decision was made to terminate operations at the end of 1995. The cessation of IMF operations removed an established vehicle for continued support to media organizations in Central and Eastern Europe and risked a hiatus in continued flow of assistance to these organizations. This fact plus USAID/ENI's interest in a more proactive media program further accelerated the design and development of a new USAID media initiative.

2. Initial USAID Request for Application (RFA)

The ProMedia Program is conducted pursuant to an \$8.0 million cooperative agreement awarded to a consortium of three American private voluntary organization in September of 1995. This award was in response to a Request for Application issued by USAID/ENI in June of that year. Despite subsequent changes in approach that document is important because it established the basic structural and managerial characteristics for the program and set forth the rationale for a more directed and deliberate USAID media program than had hitherto been the case.

The RFA noted that the primary goal of the program was to increase the flow of reliable information to citizens in Central and Eastern Europe countries by enhancing the sustainable ability of the media to perform their role. While some progress had been made, "...five years after the dramatic end of Communism, too many media in the region — especially outside the capitals, — continue struggling along in an in-between world: half free, unprofitable, demoralized, dependent, living hand to mouth, uncertain whether they have a future." Specific problems included enactment of inhibiting legislation, monopolistic control by State owned media, State control of printing and distribution channels, absence of professional associations, absence of good quality journalism education. The RFA concluded that USAID/ENI needed a new media strategy characterized by:

- Greater emphasis on media outlets outside the capital cities;
- A focus on support to the media in developing “market strength to become self-sufficient.”
- Enhanced “on the ground” presence and a program based less on targets of opportunity and more on a stated strategy.
- A focus on Southern Tier countries.
- An emphasis on the practical business needs of the media, as opposed to “exercises in journalism theory.”

The new media program was to be implemented through six activities (or “ingredients”) including support to independent news agencies, creation of alternative distribution structures, establishment of cooperative broadcast efforts, reform of media law, strengthening of professional associations and support for university journalism education. Programs within these categories would be “delivered” through short term (1-12 month) Resident Advisors, local projects, support to existing media centers, management workshops and creation of a “fund pool” for equipment purchases.

The RFA was prepared at a time when the ENI program was centered in and directed from Washington with field offices in a more subsidiary role than is currently the case in Central Europe. Thus, the basic management structure was to center on a close three-way relationship between ENI/DG in Washington, the “management group” and the in-country USAID representative. While Resident Advisors were to be installed, their responsibilities were activity specific and the duration of appointment was at most 12 months. Although activities could be initiated in the field and USAID field offices would have a more influential role in directing the media program than had previously been the case, a close reading of the RFA suggests that locus of primary responsibility and the “command center” for the program was to be in Washington. At the time, this was fully appropriate since the Central and Eastern Europe country offices did not have mission status or full budgetary authority.

Because the RFA anticipated significant involvement in program design and implementation from both USAID/Washington and from the field offices, a cooperative agreement procurement mechanism was chosen. To ensure periodic review, the RFA recommended a series of internal assessments and specified two evaluations, the first a mid term (18 month) evaluation was to be done by USAID and the second a completion (30 month) evaluation was to be done by an external evaluator.⁵ Finally and importantly, the RFA encouraged the formation of a consortium of organizations presumably on the premise that no single entity could adequately provide the broad range of envisioned capabilities.

3. Consortium Technical Proposal

In September, 1995 an \$8.0 million cooperative agreement was awarded to a consortium of three organizations comprised of IREX as prime recipient and the National Forum Foundation (subsequently Freedom House) and the Center for Foreign Journalists (subsequently the International Center for

⁵This report constitutes compliance with the requirement for an external evaluation. The evaluation was actually conducted 36 months later due to the slow start-up of the program.

Journalists) in “subcontract” roles. The successful Technical Proposal prepared by the consortium derived from and elaborated on the diagnosis and program priorities set forth in the RFA. The Proposal noted shortcomings in previous media assistance efforts including excessive focus on capital cities, reliance on one-time workshops with little systematic follow-up, lack of a coordinated strategy, the need for language skills and inadequate integration of local resources. The proposal emphasized a focus on Southeastern Europe, support for media outside the capital cities and high priority on training of trainers. Because of budgetary uncertainties, the proposal focused in particular on year I start up activities and outlined a sequential process of country assessments, the development of strategic country plans, the placement of residential advisors and “quick response” media volunteers, the conduct of a series of training workshops and the launching of a specified number of activities within priority areas: media law, university training, marketing and equipment purchases. Year II and III activities were outlined but with less specificity due to limited availability of resources.

With regard to management, while program design was to be shared, it was understood that IREX would provide central management, coordination and liaison with USAID/Washington and the USAID field offices and take the lead in the areas of media law and university education. NFF would — through its network of contacts established through the AVID and US study tour programs — be responsible for finding and administering the short term Resident Advisors, the “quick response” volunteers, manage a US based media internship program and, in year II, hire and administer a regional coordinator. The Center for Foreign Journalists would be responsible for information dissemination, the location of technical specialists and the provision of technical advice to the program. The initial obligation of funds was for \$2.6 million for eight countries, Albania, Croatia, Hungary, Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria plus a small amount for Lithuania and regional activities.

4. *Key Program Developments*

A complete and detailed history of the evolution of the program is beyond the scope of this evaluation. However, there were several developments that have had an important affect on implementation, content and basic approach. These include:

Early implementation problems and management change — There is broad consensus among virtually all those that were interviewed for this evaluation that the first year of program operations was extremely difficult and problematic. Difficulties included slow start-up and a lengthy and unproductive process of studies and field assessments, a cumbersome work planning system, poor coordination among implementing partners and some fundamental confusion with regard to roles, functions and relationships. During the early months, relations with USAID/ENI/DG were difficult with IREX feeling that USAID was micromanaging the program while ENI/DG was frustrated at the slow pace of implementation. These problems were complicated by a USAID shift toward greater field authority, the sculpting of a different role for the National Forum Foundation (see below), a growing realization that important components of the basic RFA approach were defective and problems in finding and recruiting competent Resident Advisors. A transcendent tension stemmed from the difficulty of blending the quite different culture of independent media professionals with the procedures and constraining regulations of a government program. As a result of these difficulties, in June of 1966 USAID/ENI approached IREX and insisted that they initiate dramatic changes in the structure and operations of the ProMedia program if it was to continue. In response to these strong expressions of concern from USAID/ENI, and on the basis of their own internal self assessment, IREX decided to replace the ProMedia management team and basically start anew.

Withdrawal of the Center for Foreign Journalists — The anticipated role of the Center for Foreign Journalists was to provide substantive and technical journalistic expertise in the form of journalist training and in depth knowledge about the functioning and operation of an effective media — capacities which both NFF and IREX initially lacked. In June of 1966, roughly nine months after project inception, CFJ indicated serious concern with regard to their perception of poor coordination among consortium members. Specific cited issues included a chaotic work planning process, poor coordination of the launching of the media law project, absence of an internal clearance process and overall confusion with regard to roles and responsibilities. In November 1966, CFJ gave a 60 day notice that it would terminate its involvement with the project, noting that “... the present structure to implement [the goals of the project] is so unwieldy that the effectiveness of the project is compromised.”⁶

The departure of CFJ from the consortium and the loss of this technical competence was mitigated by the growing working relationship with the Independent Journalism Foundation (IJF) based in New York. IJF had been working in Europe since 1991 and had centers in Budapest, Bratislava and Bucharest.

A change in the Freedom House Role — The original function of Freedom House in the consortium was to identify and staff the short-term resident advisor positions drawing on their extensive network of contacts available through the AVID program. This made sense to the extent that Resident Advisors and “media volunteers” were short term and activity specific. With the decision to shift the locus and energy of the program to the field, it became clear that the Resident Advisors should be full time senior professionals who would be willing to accept a long-term assignment. For this reason, because of an obligation to insure a specified share of funding to Freedom House, and in order to streamline communications and responsibility within the consortium, IREX agreed in the spring of 1996 (prior to the change in IREX management) to alter the composition of responsibilities set forth in the Technical Proposal and to allocate to Freedom House responsibility for managing the Romanian program.

A shift to a field driven approach — As previously noted, the original RFA reflected the centralized structure and operation of the USAID/ENI Bureau that existed at that time. This, coupled with the State Department’s involvement in allocating SEED funds, the inherently controversial nature of a large media program, the problems in finding competent short term Resident Advisors and the tremendous difficulties in getting the program up and running, all tended to push decision making and oversight back to Washington.

The difficulties with this approach became quickly apparent. USAID overseas offices — and embassies — wanted a greater degree of direct operational involvement, particularly in the case of a program with potentially high political sensitivities. Washington based management and decision making was cumbersome and reporting, work planning and communications were difficult. Most importantly, highly differentiated and complex country conditions necessitated senior, experienced long term Resident Advisors and a field driven management structure. Overlaying these pressures was

⁶ An additional dilemma for CFJ involved a board-imposed prohibition on receipt of US government funds for Knight International Press Fellowships. After CFJ withdrew from the ProMedia program, IREX and CFJ were able to work out a relationship that allows for ProMedia cooperation with Knight fellows on specific media projects. In addition, ProMedia continues to provide CFJ with a sub-grant that supports its Clearinghouse Project.

concomitant shift in the USAID/ENI decision making structure involving devolution of authority from Washington to the field and establishment of traditional USAID “missions” with delegated funding authority. As a consequence of all these factors, the new management team at IREX in collaboration with USAID/ENI gradually shifted program management and operations so that it would be “field driven” including employment of senior well paid media professionals for an extended duration, delegation of considerable responsibility for program design and implementation and the transfer of a significant amount of decision making authority to the field, with the Washington Office acting principally in a coordinating and supportive role. An important consequence of this structural decision was the encouragement of greater program differentiation and an inevitable blurring of the lines of demarcation between the six “ingredient” categories set forth in the initial RFA.

Original RFA approach abandoned — Largely because of the restructuring of the program to make it “field driven”, the original RFA program framework involving a draw down against specified program “ingredients” has been largely abandoned as the ProMedia program has been implemented. The distinction between a “top down” and “bottom up” approach has not proven to be particularly relevant and the discreet program categories set forth in the RFA were too generic to prove useful in individual country situations. Program activities are much more country specific and differentiated than was originally envisioned. This diversification of approach appears to have been appropriate in view of the distinctive characteristics of participating countries and the differing stages of media development in these countries.

5. Program Funding and Current Operating Structure

The initial cooperative agreement was for \$8 million for the three year period, 1995-1998. In September of 1997 an additional \$6 million was added to cover two more years of program life and continue operations through September 2000. Because of large emergent needs for Bosnia and Serbia, funding has been restructured. An additional \$5 million has been added and the funding period has been shortened to end four years from inception, in September 1999.

From a total availability of \$19 million, \$12.7 million has been obligated to date and an additional \$5.3 million recently has been made available.⁷ Allocations by country are as follows:

⁷ This additional tranche of \$5.3 million has until recently been on congressional hold pending the initiation of a program evaluation. The congressional hold was also related to internal difficulties that developed among consortium partners, discussed below.

ProMedia Program Obligations by Country (\$THOUSANDS)				
Country	Committed	Planned	Total	Percent of Total
Albania	780	400	1,180	6.5%
Croatia	1,465	1,000	2,465	13.6%
Hungary	1,086	--	1,086	6.0%
Lithuania	15	--	15	--
Slovakia	800	800	1,600	8.8%
Romania	825	200	1,025	5.7%
Bulgaria	700	400	1,100	6.1%
Ukraine	2,000	--	2,000	11.0%
Belarus	1,280	--	1,280	7.1%
Serbia	600	2,300	2,900	16.0%
Bosnia	2,464	--	2,464	13.6%
Regional	730	250	480	2.7%
Total	\$12,747	\$5,350	\$18,097	100.0%

Although each country program is distinctive and comparative program data is limited, the following gives an approximate idea of how funds are distributed by major category.

<i>ProMedia Program — Expenditures by Major Category Through 9/25/98 (\$thousands)</i>							
Country	Admin.	Training⁸	Sub- Con.	Equip- ment	Other Grants	Unex- pended	Total
Albania	170	157	116	--	1	336	780
Croatia	216	645	71	--	1132	333	1,465

⁸ Includes salary and benefits for Resident Advisors.

Hungary	193	37	691	--		165	1,086
Lithuania	7	2	--	--	--	6	15
Slovakia	363	761	6	4	--	(334)	800
Romania	61	15	791 ⁹	--	--	(41)	825
Bulgaria	291	215	80	--	4	110	700
Ukraine	193	845	123	--	--	839	2,000
Belarus	162	406	5	--	--	707	1,280
Serbia	73	97	451	--	77	(98)	600
Bosnia	--	--	--	--	--	--	2,464
Regional	272	148	245	--	15	51	732
Total	2,001	3,328	2,579	4	296	4,538	12,747

V.

FINDINGS

This section of the Report is divided into six parts that address (1) key program characteristics, (2) general and cross-cutting themes, (3) strategy and program design, (4), program results, (5) management and implementation and (6) consortium relations. The Section concludes with a brief comment on the performance standards listed in the Section II.

1.

Key Program Characteristics

The evaluation team found that the ProMedia program had a number of unique characteristics that have influenced program design and implementation. Identification of these attributes is important to an understanding of impact and relevant to recommendations regarding future directions.

High degree of differentiation — The ProMedia country programs that were studied for this report were diverse, individualistic and country specific. In general, they were “intended to provide very practical, concrete assistance and to respond to the changing needs [of the individual countries]” as one mission official observed. While the instruments employed were comparable, the approach, program priorities, geographic orientation and style of intervention were highly particularistic. The unique orientation of each country program reflects different country conditions but is augmented by varying management styles, experience and interest of the Resident Advisors and different USAID program priorities.

Impact at the program level difficult to measure — The complex, differentiated and country specific nature of the ProMedia program makes across the board impact measurement very difficult.

⁹ Administered by Freedom House

Individual activities and separate country programs can be evaluated to determine if they are meeting objectives, are cost effective or are having an effect on the viability of the media and eventually on citizen attitudes. Diagnosis, analysis and prescription at the program level are much more difficult.

State Department involvement — A distinguishing characteristic of the ProMedia program is that its potentially sensitive political content means a greater degree of State/Embassy involvement and oversight than is normally the case, particularly in those countries where the United States has taken a forward position with respect to the necessity for a strong and independent media. In addition and presumably for related reasons, the program tends to receive considerable scrutiny from within USAID itself. Involvement of multiple players and interests is understandable, probably warranted — if done with bureaucratic sensitivity — and not necessarily a troublesome attribute. However, multiple involvement complicates management, affects the field structure and makes it more difficult for both USAID and IREX to apply the standard USAID program planning and monitoring process. In general the evaluation team felt that the coordinating mechanisms that had been established at the country level were workable and appropriate.

Unusually high dependence on senior experience and capacity of field staff — IREX has made a decision to employ Resident Advisors with hands on experience and strong technical background in the media as opposed to generalist program managers. While concrete experience and technical competence is always valuable, it is particularly important in the case of media for three reasons:

- The absence of a standard approach, format or rulebook on how to strengthen the media puts a premium on the judgment and experience of program managers.
- The fact that media professionals pride themselves on being part of a unique professional guild means that direct and extended media experience is important in gaining their confidence and establishing credibility.
- The unique nature of the media business reflects high technical content, market peculiarities, industry structure and particular style and culture.

US organizations that work with the media are ambivalent about the propriety of US Government involvement — A final characteristic of the ProMedia program is that while the program is generally not perceived as intrusive or politically controversial by in-country participants, it can touch sensitivities among participating American organizations that are committed to fundamental principles of a free and independent press and have deep ambivalence with regard to direct government efforts to work with the media. The evaluation team believes that, for example, this underlying tension was the cause for some of the early consortium difficulties.¹⁰

2. General and Crosscutting Themes

Weak management capacity is an impediment to the development of a responsible and effective media and progress toward democratic governance — There is virtual unanimity among both supporters and critics of the ProMedia program that a strengthened, viable and professional media

¹⁰ On three occasions the evaluation team was emphatically told by a senior staff member of a US media organization that the United States had “no business” training journalists of another country.

infrastructure is of pivotal importance to sustained progress toward democratic governance in Central and Eastern Europe. This central finding was underscored both directly and indirectly and in a variety of different ways in virtually every background discussion and interview conducted for this evaluation.

There is a demand for the services that ProMedia provides — A broad consensus exists among those interviewed for this study that the programs and activities funded by ProMedia constitute things that need to be done in order to strengthen the media in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. While there were a few observers who argued that it was inappropriate for the United States to be directly engaged with foreign media and many who made positive suggestions about the structure and composition and management of the program and ways in which it could be improved, the evaluation team did not hear a complaint that the activities were redundant or could be more effectively handled by indigenous organizations.

ProMedia not viewed as politically intrusive by recipients — The ProMedia program and specifically the involvement of the US government is not perceived as inappropriate, intrusive or politically controversial by members of the media in participating Central and Eastern European countries nor has it acted as a lightning rod for criticism of the USG for intervening or attempting to manipulate the media. While the regimes that are in power may complain about American involvement — as happened in Slovakia and Croatia — there was near universal consensus among media organizations that accepting USG funds to strengthen the quality of journalism does not constitute a form of political compromise.¹¹

3. *Strategy and Program Design*

The following findings address the effectiveness of overall program strategy and design.

ProMedia programs tend to be activity driven — The evaluation team found that the ProMedia and Freedom House country programs that were visited were not “strategic” in the sense that they did not derive from a deliberate, systematic attempt to do a comprehensive assessment of the country situation and target resources in an optimal fashion based on that assessment. In general, the ProMedia programs are driven by opportunities that emerge and further shaped by a broad set of program objectives such as priority for provincial activities or the importance of sustainability and replication. Program priorities are also importantly influenced by the interests, experience and judgment of the Resident Advisors and further shaped through their interaction with Mission personnel.

Centrifugal tendency — Because ProMedia programs are country driven, responsive to opportunities, influenced by the personalities and experience of Resident Advisors and not constrained by the parameters of an assessment plan, or an overall limiting design, the program manifests a tendency toward diversification and scatteration. This does not mean that individual activities are deficient or that they should be shoehorned into a mold that does not fit for the sake of conceptual elegance. However, there are costs to excessive splintering that program managers need to be aware of including diminished opportunities for multi-country linkages, cost savings due to economies of scale,

¹¹ In all interviews with media managers and journalists the evaluation team asked whether or not there were real or perceived negative political implications linked to the receipt of US Government funds. While clearly the response was influenced by the identity of the interviewer, the team was impressed with the fact that there was full consensus that the negative implications were non-existent.

reduced impact due to ad hoc sequencing and a blurring of program purpose. Balancing the desirability of individual country opportunities against the desirability of maintaining a larger structural integrity is difficult and on balance the evaluation team believes that ProMedia has been successful in finding that equilibrium. At the same time, the team believes that as the program evolves and grows it will be important to be increasingly specific about program priorities and to maintain tighter boundaries around program content.

Diffusion of integrating program structure — While IREX and Freedom House have successfully managed to restructure program operations and program substance so that they center on and derive from country conditions, this has meant some loss of overall programmatic structure and integrity. As emphasized in several sections of this Report, the evaluation team fully supports the “field driven” approach, the decision to bring in seasoned media professionals and the importance of flexibility and adaptability. If forced to choose between a top down centralized approach to media strengthening and a highly diverse country based emphasis, the team would strongly favor the latter. At the same time, there are important benefits to a balanced degree of central program guidance, the establishment of an architecture of guiding principles and a systematic process of central learning. It is not that IREX or Freedom House lack a set of formative principles and an integrating strategy but that more needs to be done give the program coherence, knit together disparate elements, integrate lessons learned and address some of the important conceptual issues of the sort that are briefly identified in Section VI of the Report. Much can be accomplished through a series of small actions that do not threaten the basic principle of decentralized authority and responsibility. For example: creation of a Pro-Media web page where case studies could be posted and issues discussed; the systematic scheduling of a series of country by country program assessments (particularly important prior to the re-bid of the program to establish a baseline analysis against which new program directions can be evaluated); commissioning of case studies and “lessons learned” papers for distribution among ProMedia countries; a more regular and systematic resident advisor rotation and “exchange program” which would take advantage of the different technical backgrounds of the country managers; the gradual development of a book of discretionary policy guidelines and, most importantly, the continued preparation of a ProMedia strategic plan that builds on and is consistent with the results framework but develops ProMedia’s own vision of the future and grapples with the fundamental issues and trade-offs.¹²

Potential complementarities with other USAID programs — The ProMedia program involves limited but important opportunities to take advantage of synergies with other USAID programs. A good example is governmental decentralization and efforts to strengthen the capacity of local government where a strong local media can be immensely valuable in informing citizens about new roles and functions. Another crossover is with civil society and NGO strengthening activities where the media can have a very positive effect in spotlighting the role and function of a growing independent sector. The media can obviously have an important function in advancing citizen understanding of many public policy issues including for example, women’s issues, the environment and public health.

Geographic composition — Although IREX does not collect data on regional diversification, it was clear to the evaluation team that a concerted effort has been made to work in the provincial areas. In four of the five countries visited for this evaluation — Slovakia, Hungary, Ukraine and Croatia — the

¹² IREX correctly points out that this process was begun in June of 1997 with a workshop in Zagreb that included Resident Advisors, ENI/DGSR and Freedom House staff and that an expanded version of this workshop was held in April, 1998 in Bratislava.

primary emphasis was on support of media organizations outside the capital center or to media associations that are located at the center but have members throughout the country.

The strategy of working outside the capital and concentrating on smaller, regional organizations is consistent with the original intent of the RFA and has the benefit of reaching populations that may not otherwise have routine access to media information. In countries where the government-owned press is dominant, it may be the only option available. The downside of this approach is often reduced impact on number of citizens, higher delivery cost and greater risk of failure. The optimal solution to this dilemma is to support networks or affiliations of regional organizations (as is done in Croatia) with a view to achieving broad impact while at the same time building a sustainable base of regional organizations.

Program composition by media type. The country based orientation of the ProMedia program renders it difficult to make useful region wide generalizations about the optimal balance between print, radio, television or other media forms.¹³ In general the evaluation team felt that the *process* for making these determinations was appropriate and that the rationale in each case was supportable. One of the fundamental dilemmas that confronts each country program is how to balance between broad outreach to a large number of citizens — which presumably argues for television — and sustained support to individual organizations to help them become viable. The attached country Reports comment on country by country composition of support.

Program priorities — The following findings address program priorities as perceived by media organizations interviewed for this evaluation.

Importance of better management and organizational strengthening. A repeated theme that surfaced in nearly every discussion was that the growth of an influential and independent media sector depended heavily on the capacity of media organizations to strengthen their financial base through better management and marketing. In every country visited for this Report, the principal bottleneck to a vibrant media was repeatedly cited as poor management and inadequate business training. While direct financial aid, the importance of sophisticated equipment, the need for professional associations and better trained journalists are also needed, clear first priority is given to management and organizational development.¹⁴

Understanding concepts of profitability and return on investment. A characteristic of many of the media organizations that were interviewed for this evaluation was a poor understanding of profitability, share value, how to calculate return on investment and make decisions based on

¹³ The Internet is only in its infancy but will have an immense future impact on the media and communications in Central Europe. Pretty soon, at low cost, media in the ProMedia countries will be able to receive vastly — *vastly* — more information, pictures, sound and film through the Internet than now. Even now, we can see media in Slovakia, Romania and Ukraine using computers/Internet to make up newspapers, download photographs, surf the Internet for news, manage newspaper/TV and radio finances. AID/ProMedia may want to consider commissioning a brainstorming study that would imagine how the Internet can be used in connection with the ProMedia program. And then incorporate the findings into the new programs.

¹⁴ The Summary Section of the 1995 RFA notes “The ProMedia Program... has a heavy business/management orientation.” The subsequent Sections of the RFA periodically allude to this emphasis but the clarity of initial focus is diluted in the balance of the document.

financial strategy. Many of these organizations are in business to advocate for a particular point of view or because of the romance of journalism. While perhaps admirable, these organizations are not likely to be sustainable over the long run or to offer much competition to well financed public sector media outlets.

Priority on business basics. Although not always the case, a supporting theme that emerged from these discussions was the desire for and critical importance of training and support in managerial *basics* including marketing and advertising, financial management, long range planning, governance and the role of boards of directors.

Benefits of association building. The evaluation team found that there was a considerable demand among journalists and media professionals from all branches of the media for more and stronger membership associations that would advocate for the rights and freedoms of an independent media, establish professional standards and codes of conduct and support a range of services to individuals and member organizations designed to improve their organizational capacity. Associations tend to be flexible and adaptive and can support a variety of programs from journalism training to legislative advocacy. An emphasis on strengthening associations builds indigenous capacity, provides a institutional location for continuation of the types of activities that ProMedia supports, begins to define an exit strategy and may offer opportunities to leverage additional donor or charitable funds.¹⁵

In a related vein, a frequently stated concern was the need to develop a long-term indigenous ability to provide the type of capacity strengthening support currently available from the ProMedia program. One model that is particularly attractive is provided by the Independent Journalism Foundation (IJF) which operates Centers in Slovakia, Romania, Hungary and the Czech Republic. The evaluation team visited IJF offices in three countries and was impressed with the quality and professionalism of work. In Hungary, the ProMedia program has successfully operated through the IJF affiliate and while that ProMedia program is coming to an end, a very effective effort has been made to locate future financial support in order to continue the activities funded by ProMedia and ensure that the Center will remain in place. While there is a danger that media centers will concentrate excessively on working with institutions located in the capital city, they do offer a potential mechanism for continuing some of the activities funded by ProMedia and provide an institutional base for attracting other donor support for media activities.

4. Program Results

As noted, the direct measurement of impact at the Program and at the country level is difficult for several reasons:

The ProMedia program is quite new. Despite the fact that the cooperative agreement was executed in 1995, start up problems have meant that in most countries, effective operations have been in place for two years or less and there has been inadequate time to accomplish a

¹⁵ It is important to emphasize that associations should obviously not be given high priority where they don't exist or where they are too weak to benefit from the assistance.

structural impact and fully and convincingly document results.¹⁶

A large part of the program concentrates on building institutional capacity. It is inherently difficult to convincingly measure increased or enhanced organizational capacity in the short run. In the long run, stronger capacity can be measured by rates of growth and survival but in the short run one must refer to proxy measures such as the existence of a strategic plan, an increase in the overall share of advertising, in place systems and procedures or the design of the governance structure.

Because the program is country specific, highly differentiated and in some cases, driven by opportunities and the occasional intervention of foreign policy judgements, it has been difficult to develop a body of data or information that would provide a basis for cross country comparison of impact and a baseline against which to measure progress within individual countries. There has also not been extensive opportunity to document what works and what does not work. Frequently, throughout the course of this evaluation, the team was presented with a strong opinion about a particular approach or activity but with little basis on which to make a comparative analysis.

In general, USAID/ENI/DGSR and USAID missions have shown flexibility in their willingness to accept anecdotal measures of results. Thus, while IREX has developed a results framework for the program and for individual countries (see below) they have not developed a common set of measurement indicators at the program level and individual country programs — with some exceptions, such as Bulgaria — have generally not prepared a full set of indicators for their country programs. On the other hand, IREX has in its semi-annual reports developed a wealth of descriptive information that in cumulative total is helpful in assessing overall impact.¹⁷

The country reports in Attachment #1 provide a brief description of important activities in those countries that were visited and highlight results to date. Highlights include:

Association Development. In Croatia, ProMedia has worked closely with the Croatian Journalist Association to strengthen its management and get the organization on a sound financial footing; in Romania, ProMedia has established an Audit Bureau of Circulation representing 60 publications throughout the country that will reliably audit circulation data; in Slovakia, ProMedia is working with the Slovak Syndicate of Journalists to develop a media monitoring program that will improve the quality of news reporting; in Ukraine, ProMedia is working with the press center in Kiev to define their role and increase their available resources.

Business Management Training. In Croatia, ProMedia supported a series of direct management consultations for a group of radio stations designed to improve their marketing

¹⁶ In Croatia ProMedia began in January of '97, in Ukraine in October of '96. In Slovakia the program began in 1996 but faced start up difficulties and was not effectively operational until the spring of 1997. In Romania also faced start-up problems and was not operational until late 1996.

¹⁷ The use of cumulative anecdotal information to measure results is a respectable research tool and an acceptable way to report on progress and impact. However, anecdotal information is most useful when it is grouped in categories and assembled over time so that some broad generalizations can be developed. Thus, anecdotal does not necessarily mean random. The difficulty with using anecdotal information is that it tends to describe inputs, is not generally helpful in making comparisons or, for example, in setting budget levels among competing programs.

and advertising, enhance their technical capacity and make appropriate internal organizational adjustments; Croatia has also recently sponsored training for print media managers; in Romania, ProMedia used the services of a former AVID volunteer and sponsored a series of lectures at the University in Bucharest on journalism management; in Slovakia, ProMedia worked with a group of radio stations to improve financial management and financial reporting;

More Professional Journalism. In Croatia, ProMedia supported a series of programs to train journalists and to improve their understanding of the role of journalists, ethical issues and relations with government; in Hungary, ProMedia works through the Independent Journalism Foundation to provide a wide range of training programs to journalists on such topics as election coverage and how to deal with ethnic and minority issues; in Ukraine ProMedia has supported a series of roundtable discussion on election coverage and has translated and printed informational documents on that subject.

Other, miscellaneous. In Croatia, ProMedia is working with an association of television stations to link into an established fiber optic network that will permit the transfer of program material and encourage collaboration and cost sharing; in Hungary, ProMedia's affiliate, the Independent Journalism Foundation, sponsored a creative program to provide opportunities in journalism to Roma students and supported a 3 part training program in journalism for Roma interns; in Romania, ProMedia assisted in the establishment of the first journalism award for feature writing and sponsored a series of US internships for media managers and journalists; in Slovakia, ProMedia designed a "model station" technical template and negotiated reduced prices so that local TV stations could upgrade their equipment; in Ukraine, ProMedia is working with the State University to establish a Western style student newspaper to be prepared by the journalism department.

Media law program — In every ProMedia country there are important legal issues and significant existing or potential constraints of a direct or indirect nature on the freedom and operations of the media. The media law component of the program has been an excellent example of leveraging private sector money and support and there is broad agreement that the technical quality of the work by their implementing law firm, Covington and Burling has been excellent. To date, the media law component of the ProMedia program has concentrated on: analyzing proposed or enacted laws; providing legal experts to help in program design and to participate in policy debates; supporting seminars for journalists; training journalist groups in self defense; providing US based training to media lawyers and associations. Opinions and policy papers prepared pursuant to the media law component of the program have been inserted into the legislative process in several countries and have been used to leverage for reform in direct policy level discussions with USG officials.

Currently the media law component of the program tends to be *ad hoc* and situation specific. A central issue is whether a more strategic and proactive effort should be made that would concentrate on building the capacity of indigenous advocacy organization to lobby for reforms. This would imply a tighter link between the important analytical work that Covington and Burling is now doing and ProMedia's training and sub-grant programs. The issue is complicated by the fact that Covington and Burling is a private law firm operating *pro bono* with no formal contractual relationship to USAID.

Ad hoc nature of management workshops — Provision of management workshops in marketing,

advertising and various aspects of business management is an important and characteristic component of the ProMedia program. Three issues serviced during the consultancy. First, there is some concern that workshop participants do not fully participate in discussions because of concerns regarding competitive advantage. Secondly, the marginal benefit of using imported United States trainers or “imported media stars” as one participant noted, is not always clear. While perhaps difficult to locate, the team felt that a greater effort should be made to locate media trainers with direct European experience who could more directly relate to the problems and the attitudes and mind sets of participants than is the case with a trainer brought in from the United States. Thirdly, management workshops tend to be offered as one-time events dealing with an important, discreet issue or topic. This does not mean that they lack value or impact and in general participants indicated strong enthusiasm for the seminars and workshops that they had attended. At the same time, the evaluation team was struck by the potential for heightened impact through the design of a series of phased, sequential workshops that would link various aspects of media management into a meaningful structure that would identify linkages and relationships and be keyed to the phases of organizational development.

The difficult problem of measuring the benefit of study/training tours — Study/training tours for media professionals to the United States and also to Central Europe are an important component activity of every ProMedia country program, particularly in Romania where the program is oriented around the core programs of Freedom House. Interviews with individuals had participated in tours to the United States invariably indicate a high level of satisfaction and an enthusiastic belief that the experience was both personally and professionally invaluable — several Freedom House participants referred to their experience in the United States as “life changing” — and in general, the members of the evaluation team were impressed with the personal qualifications and professional accomplishments of individuals who had participated in study tours. However, the team had reservations with regard to the effectiveness of study tour programs in comparison to other interventions that could be used to strengthen the independent media. In summary, study tours do not have a larger institutional impact, the individual may or may not sustain a career in the media, the benefits of the experience tend to be subjective, the unit costs are quite high and the program tends to favor individuals with an established facility in English. In addition, there is some question as to whether or not an experience with a US media organization is directly relevant to working conditions in the home country.

The difficult problem of sustainability — The ProMedia program has been reasonably successful in supporting and creating programs and institutions that are likely to remain self sufficient. Positive examples include the Center for Journalism in Budapest, the ABC in Bucharest and the Media Press Agency in Bratislava. Resident Advisors talk about and give high priority to sustainable impact and program reports underscore achievements and success stories. While this emphasis is encouraging, the inherent characteristics of the program — its activity specific emphasis, an inclination to be opportunistic, the operational “roll up your shirtsleeves” approach of the Resident Advisors, the fluid and dynamic nature of the industry, the imperative of “results” and the occasional foreign policy pressure from State — all tend to divert attention away from gradual and systematic building of organizational sustainability. An additional problem is that if the primary purpose of ProMedia is more and better information in the hands of citizens, the long term existence of individual media organizations is of secondary concern to the general health of the media industry. In fact, one could argue that under some circumstances it is counterproductive to attempt to sustain individual organizations in an environment that should be fluid and competitive if the best are to succeed. These are difficult balance points but on balance, the evaluation team felt that in most countries ProMedia

needed to devote more attention to developing practical approaches in working with organizations that would focus on long run institutional health rather than fire-fighting short term issues. (Also see brief issue discussion at Section VI.)

The need for exit planning —¹⁸ In general, ProMedia managers have been reluctant to engage in exit planning at either the country or activity level. While the hesitation is understandable, exit planning is important to sustainability and will help program managers at ProMedia and USAID sort through funding priorities by focusing attention on how to wind down and terminate activities and on what will be left behind in a country when ProMedia has left.

Synergies occur within the country context — A goal of the original RFA was that the various program ingredients would be combined in a manner that would maximize synergy among the components. In general the evaluation team found that Resident Advisors were creative at spotting complementarities and potential linkages and that considerable synergy took place within the country programs. At the same time and in reference to the need for a stronger overall program structure (see findings under Strategy and Program Design), the evaluation team felt that there were opportunities to cultivate synergies between country programs that could be further developed if the ProMedia program had a stronger guiding structure.

Cost Effectiveness and cost sharing — The evaluation team did not attempt to develop a comprehensive and in-depth cost/benefit analysis for the overall program or for individual country components. In view of the difficulty of quantifying benefits, this would be an immensely complex and difficult task. (The team did note that the IREX cost of managing the program — headquarters salary and support — is under 20 percent of the total budget and that this appeared quite reasonable and that there were numerous instance of contributed time and technical expertise in the project, the most notable being the *pro bono* work of Covington and Burling.)

With respect to *cost sharing*, both IREX and Freedom House have attempted to obtain offsetting contributions from the local organizations with which they work and from indigenous individuals that participate in management workshops. Both indicate that as a matter of principle, cost sharing is important and appreciate the importance of gradually introducing the habit of some form of cost sharing in their work. Nevertheless and despite good intent, the principle of cost sharing appears to be applied on a case by case basis with mixed success. The problem, of course, is that resources are tight and if cost sharing is mandated in a formulaic fashion, participants will not attend and organizations will not apply for assistance. On balance, the evaluation team would encourage ProMedia to develop a standard comprehensive policy with respect to cost sharing that Resident Advisors could refer to in their negotiations with prospective recipients.

5. Management, Implementation and Monitoring

These findings deal with the management structure, internal communication, relationships with USAID in Washington and the field, staffing issues and challenges faced during initial program start-up.

Start-up problems have been constructively addressed by IREX management — As noted under

¹⁸ By “exit planning” the evaluation team means those actions and decisions at the program level that can wind down the program in an efficient and optimal manner.

Background, the ProMedia program had a problematic beginning. Consortium roles and relations were unclear, communications between USAID in the field and in Washington were poor, the four way management structure was unwieldy, recruitment of competent Resident Advisors proved difficult and the program approach set forth in the technical proposal was, in important respects, inappropriate. The first year of the program was, according to one participant, “stormy”.

A central finding of this evaluation is that the management issues and structural deficiencies confronted during the first year of the program have been constructively addressed and significantly resolved. To the extent that difficulties remain, they tend to derive from the inherently complex USAID/IREX and field/Washington structure and to the problems of managing a politically sensitive and controversial program. To summarize accomplishments:

A field driven management structure has been designed and put in place. This has included the installation of more senior and better paid Resident Advisors and a concomitant shift of a full range of management responsibilities to the field with IREX/Washington staff providing support, cross-country coordination, financial and accounting services and liaison with USAID/Washington. A concerted effort was made to clarify lines of communication, avoid “back channels” second-guessing and duplicate “technical review”.

Relations with USAID/Washington and USAID/field missions are open, fundamentally constructive and absent of serious rancor or dispute. ProMedia field staff and USAID field staff communicate effectively and work well together. Inevitable difficulties appear to be resolved with the help of IREX/Washington with a minimum of trauma.

USAID missions believe that IREX/ProMedia is attentive and responsive to Mission concerns and priorities. IREX/ProMedia, in turn, has made a deliberate and needed effort to bring their own staff up to speed with respect to the USAID program planning process and USAID nomenclature dealing with performance, indicators and results.

The work planning and reporting process appears to be functioning in a reasonably efficient manner given the number of participants and the complexity of the budget planning process — made more difficult by the recent congressional hold on additional obligations. While the Six Month Reports consume a considerable amount of time to prepare, the team felt that they were relevant and an important vehicle for sharing lessons learned and to the development of a stronger programmatic identity.

The roles and responsibilities of Resident Advisors, IREX/Washington staff and USAID/mission staff are clear to participants. There was no indication during the conduct of this evaluation of ambiguity regarding the role of the resident advisor.

While there is inevitably some degree of tension between USAID missions and ProMedia field staff with regard to the usual set of concerns regarding program priorities and rare complaints of “micro-management”, the evaluation team believes that these tensions are within the acceptable limits that almost always accompany the ambiguity of a cooperative agreement. (In addition, the team noted that where specific personnel or program issues have arisen, IREX has been quick to respond and rectify the situation.)

Structural problems remain — Despite the constructive and largely successful effort to address early management problems and deficiencies in basic program design, the evaluation team heard a persistent concern that the complex four-way management structure was burdensome and that despite the best of intent, communications could be problematic. In particular, several of the USAID missions raised concerns about the role and function of ENI/DGSR in monitoring and overseeing program operations. Identified issues included: occasional break down in communications between USAID/Washington and the missions; a few instances of perceived over-management and programmatic interference; absence or inadequacy of basic background information; poor coordination and occasional confusion as to whether and to what degree ENI/DGSR could appropriately take initiating action to start, modify or curtail an activity. It is important to emphasize that in *no* instance were these concerns of a personal nature and that, to the contrary, the atmosphere surrounding the IREX/USAID relationship and the working relationship between the missions and ENI/DGSR is characterized by collegiality, good will and mutuality of purpose.

The evaluation team concurs with the importance of maintaining a clearly delineated structure of ENI/DGSR oversight of the ProMedia project. The close involvement of State, strong congressional interest, the inherent high profile nature of the media activity, the importance of “lesson learning” in a relatively new program area all argue for Washington based backstopping and involvement. At the same time, it is important that roles and responsibilities be clearly defined so that it is clear that ENI/DGSR is acting in a support capacity that is non-operational. This will not be easy. Because of the pressures on the program, it is almost inevitable that there will be tensions between the missions and ENI/DGSR and lapses in coordination that may ripple out to affect IREX. One small but important constructive step that could be taken would be to develop standard “job descriptions” for the various players that could provide guidance. This could be done in conjunction with the enhanced country-based strategic planning that is recommended in this Report. At least, the process of identifying the full range of functions and thinking through the distribution of responsibilities would be helpful. While the team does not wish to overemphasize this problem, it is of sufficient importance to warrant sustained attention.

Comprehensive media assessments not conducted — In general, the comprehensive and systematic media assessment process envisioned in the Technical Proposal has not been carried out in those countries visited for this evaluation. It is important to emphasize that this does not mean that no assessment was conducted or lead to a conclusion that program content is necessarily flawed. In all countries visited, some form of rapid appraisal was prepared and in all countries the evaluation team was impressed with the depth and breadth of ProMedia’s knowledge of the media industry. As noted below, start up problems, intense pressure to show results and early difficulties in recruiting experienced Resident Advisors tended to short circuit the assessment phase of program design. On balance this has meant a program that is up and running and demonstrating impact. The downside is some deficiency in the type of benchmark analysis that would provide a basis for measuring progress.

Highly qualified field staff— The wisdom of the decision to locate the driving energy of the program in the resident advisor depends heavily on the location and employment of individuals that have a special blend of journalistic and Central European experience and the capacity to work within the normative boundaries of a government funded and managed program. On the basis of five country visits and a review of biographical data sheets, the evaluation team determined that IREX as well as Freedom House had been successful in finding Resident Advisors that met these criteria. In all nine ProMedia countries , the Resident Advisors have had a prior career in media coupled with experience

working in Central Europe. Credentials include general manager of a television station, assistant supervisory editor of a large urban newspaper, a CBS Vice President for Affiliate Services, editor of a Hungarian daily newspaper, a reporter/editor of the Boston Globe, CEO and General Manager of an Alaskan public radio station, and reporter and editor for the Kansas City Star.

The ProMedia results framework — The ProMedia program is located within USAID's strategic objective (SO2.1) "Increased better informed citizen participation in public policy decision making". IREX, in collaboration with ENI/DGSR and the Resident Advisors has prepared a results framework for the program as a whole and has worked with individual country programs to prepare results frameworks for these countries which, in all cases, fall within SO2.1.

The objective for the ProMedia program as a whole is to "enhance the capabilities of media entities in the CEE to become independent sustainable institutions". The four intermediate results that support this objective are "effective and efficient management", high quality journalism education; an increase in the number of independent and sustainable media institutions and a supportive legal and regulatory environment.

The evaluation team reviewed the most current results frameworks for the program as a whole and for all individual ProMedia countries except Bosnia and offers the following comments:

IREX has taken the results planning methodology conscientiously and has used the technique to develop greater clarity and coherence about program goals and strategy. A training workshop with all Resident Advisors with the services of a trained facilitator in performance planning was conducted in June of 1997 and IREX/Washington has given performance planning high priority in follow up interactions with the field.

On balance, the results frameworks for the ProMedia program and for most of the individual country programs are reasonably clear and logical. They provide a framework for understanding the overall goal of the program and the manner in which individual countries have made adaptations to reflect differing country situations.

ProMedia Resident Advisors have received considerable assistance from Washington/IREX in the preparation of results packages and selection of appropriate performance indicators. In view of the cultural resistance to "bureaucratic" mechanisms, this buffering and distribution of responsibilities has made sense during the formative stage of the ProMedia program.¹⁹ Most Resident Advisors grudgingly agreed that the results framework was a useful technique that forced them to think more clearly about program direction but not a central aspect of program planning.²⁰

¹⁹ The evaluation team itself has had some serious initial misgivings about the role and benefit of results packages and the preparation of hierarchical performance structures. -- the language seemed divorced from country reality and the exercise appeared irrelevant to real world problems faced by media organizations. On balance the team believes that the ProMedia program will benefit significantly from the discipline of applying a logical program planning process that is clear about objective, identifies results and monitors progress.

²⁰ In Romania, the current ProMedia staff (both very competent) had not participated in and had limited understanding of the results planning process and framework for that country and had by and large turned responsibility for the preparation and monitoring of this process to the USAID mission. Although the preceding resident advisor had participated in an IREX sponsored workshop on the subject, it was apparent to the evaluation

On the basis of interviews, the process of working through the results framework, while difficult and resisted by some, has generally been helpful in clarifying program purpose and priorities. While there is still residual concern that the results planning process is an irrelevant waste of time, there is growing acceptance among ProMedia staff that if the approach is applied in a flexible and adaptive manner it can help program managers.

In general, the results framework for the individual countries is consistent with the overall framework for the Program. Of the nine individual ProMedia country programs (Bosnia excluded), seven have articulated a primary strategic objective that is basically within the conceptual parameters of the SO for the ProMedia program as a whole i.e. institutional sustainability — although the descriptive language differs country to country. (In Slovakia the objective includes business performance but several other objectives as well and in Croatia the current objective is increased balance in media reporting.)

While the language and structure of the results framework differ from country to county (and the actual programs as implemented are quite different) the areas of overall primary emphasis set forth in the RFA are comparable. Thus, eight of the nine ProMedia countries include an intermediate result that stresses the improved quality of reporting and journalism, eight of the nine include an intermediate result that addresses management or organizational strengthening and eight of the nine include an intermediate result that addresses the legal and/or regulatory environment.

While the preceding comments are favorable, the evaluation team also encountered significant skepticism and periodic cynicism with regard to the utility of the results framework structure centered primarily on the concern that the system has little relevance to the difficult practical realities of building a strong media in the region. These are our observations:

It has proven difficult for Resident Advisors to understand how to use the results framework to accomplish their own management objectives. On the one hand, the results framework is at too high a level of conceptual generality to be helpful in implementation planning nor does it appear to be particularly relevant to the traditional process of strategic planning — assessing the pros and cons of different approaches against an array of opportunities and challenges.

In some cases, because Resident Advisors either do not fully understand the process or feel it is inapplicable to their situation, the work, preparation and monitoring of the results framework material has been passed back to IREX headquarters with some loss in the potential benefits that could be realized.

Because the country programs are quite different in emphasis and content, it has been difficult to construct an overall framework that is simultaneously consistent and unifying on the one hand and that reflects unique country circumstances on the other. Resident Advisors thus voiced the concern that their country programs were being “shoehorned” into a structure that was not applicable.

team that Freedom House did not believe that the results planning exercise warranted serious attention.

With regard to the identification and use of progress indicators, the situation is mixed. Some of the intermediate results for the ProMedia program are framed in a way that allows measurement of progress over time. Thus for example, the intermediate results for better management are the existence of media networks, the existence of business plans and the use of market research — all verifiable phenomena. Other intermediate results as articulated are more difficult to monitor e.g. “supportive legal and regulatory environment” involves more than the passage of legislation and necessitates a judgment about the overall climate affecting free speech; “increased professionalism” tends to be subjective and is probably a culturally biased concept; the capacity of the media to “reflect accuracy, pluralism and diversity” or to “provide useful, balanced and accurate information to citizens” may be objectively verifiable but at considerable cost for research and data collection. Because of these dilemmas, IREX in its reporting has often relied on a collection of anecdotal examples and case studies to illustrate progress and impact and USAID has been forthcoming in allowing a deviation from the normal requirement for quantitative results.

At a higher level of conceptual analysis, while the results framework for the ProMedia program (enhanced media capability) has a strong intuitive connection to the Agency’s SO 2 (More and better informed citizen participation), there are an important set of intermediary assumptions that lie outside the framework and that need to be explored including for example the link between organizational capability and good reporting, the extent of citizen access to media outlets, purchasing power of consumers, citizen capacity to understand and interpret and the existence of an overall culture and climate that is conducive to citizen participation in the public affairs. (Also see Section VI for a brief discussion of issues that in part emerge from the purpose structure of the Program.)

On balance, the evaluation team believes that IREX and USAID representative in the field and in Washington have been successful in applying the results planning process in an adaptive manner and in constructing a results framework that has had positive utility. There are clearly deficiencies in the system that go beyond the purpose of this evaluation and there is clearly more work that IREX needs to do to sharpen and clarify program and country objectives and results, internalize the process and make the system useful and relevant to managers. An ongoing challenge will be to accommodate the distinctive nature of each country program within the overall planning framework.

6. *Consortium Relations*

The following findings address the utility of the overall consortium model and relations among consortium partners.

Anticipated synergies from mixing organizations with different comparative advantage has not been realized — As noted in the Background Section, the original ProMedia consortium arrangement has effectively dissolved. One partner, the Center for Journalists, dropped out of the consortium after roughly one year due to concerns regarding program coordination and an institutional reluctance to participate in media assistance activities financed by the US government. The second partner, Freedom House, recast its role within the consortium from a set of functional responsibilities that would apply across the region, to bilateral management of the Romanian program. While Freedom House has provided staff assistance to several other country programs, the Romanian program is operated essentially as an independent and disconnected ProMedia activity with a different program approach

and operating style.²¹ This structural and managerial program separation is not harmful per se and in fact the Romanian program is viewed by the USAID mission as effective and valuable. However, the theoretical synergies and hoped for complementarities that formed the rationale for the consortium arrangement in the first place have not materialized.

Validity of consortium concept is fundamentally flawed — When questioned on the subject, the majority of those interviewed for this evaluation doubted the workability of a consortium arrangement to implement the ProMedia program.²² Skeptical concerns included: the managerial complexity inherent in coordinating a field based program in ten or more countries among different implementing entities; the considerable difficulty of dividing media activities into functional or topical categories for distribution purposes; the absence of a clear compartmentalization of skills by organization among those institutions that are likely to come together in a consortium arrangement and the sensitivities and cultural and stylistic differences that appear to be particularly acute among media organizations and make collaboration difficult. To some degree, the evaluation team believes that some or all of these factors affected the viability of the original IREX consortium.

Dispute between IREX and Freedom House has not seriously damaged individual country programs — As mentioned in the Background Section, IREX and Freedom House have had serious disagreements with regard to the distribution of responsibilities under the cooperative agreement and the sharing of resources pursuant to that agreement. The evaluation team has had an opportunity to review the extensive correspondence that has been generated as a consequence of these discussions and has had lengthy discussions with the principals with respect to the impact that these differences may have on program management and on achievement of the goals set forth in the cooperative agreement. The team has also asked ProMedia staff, Resident Advisors and USAID/Washington and field personnel whether these differences have damaged ProMedia programs in individual countries. In all instances there was broad consensus that the controversy has not involved field programs or staff and that country programs have not been adversely affected.

Differences between IREX and Freedom House have involved a significant opportunity cost — While differences between the two consortium partners have not directly damaged individual country programs, there is some evidence that the benefits that would normally emerge from cooperation between two different organizations with different experience and skill endowments has not occurred.²³ While it is difficult to document a result that has not been accomplished, the evaluation team noted the

²¹ Other IREX/ProMedia programs do not systematically incorporate Freedom House instrumentality's -- AVID volunteers and US study tours and in several cases the evaluation team was surprised at the lack of knowledge and information about these basic Freedom House offerings.

²² These comments do not apply to the good working relationship that has developed with Covington and Burling in support of the media law program. However, this relationship does not involve shared operations and integrated management.

²³ The evaluation team recognizes that this is a judgment call. In their response to the draft report, IREX disagrees with this assessment and argues that they have attempted to fully integrate Freedom House into program planning and operations. IREX points out that they have organized monthly consortium meetings and encouraged full and open communications between Freedom House and IREX Resident Advisors. Two of the Freedom House AVID volunteers were used by IREX as trainers and consultants. IREX also notes that it is not necessarily the case that synergies should have arisen between the two organizations since IREX does not view the Freedom House focus on emerging leaders as directly beneficial to their country programs. While these are useful balancing observations, the evaluation team continues to believe that there has not been the close, collaborative coordination and integrated strategic thinking that underlies the basic rationale for a consortium arrangement.

absence of administrative integration, the lack of information about AVID volunteers, the limited exchange of technical resources and talent, and most importantly the overall impression of two quite different program philosophies, styles and approaches. Thus in Romania, Freedom House does concentrate on building management capacity but puts heavy emphasis on identifying future leaders and individuals of high promise and relies on internships and study tours accomplish this objective. They have established an impressive “alumni association” with members located in the most influential media outlets in the country. But the Freedom House approach in Romania is quite different from the strategy adopted by IREX in other countries where the emphasis is more on training, in country activities and association building. The evaluation team believes that both approaches are legitimate but is concerned about the conceptual bifurcation and the absence of synergies that should have arisen.

Evaluation team comments on the IREX/Freedom House debate — See Section VIII, Issues for Discussion.

7. *Assessment of ProMedia Against Evaluation Team Performance Standards*

Part III of this Report listed 6 performance standards that the evaluation team believes are important in evaluating the effectiveness of complex development activities. These standards influenced the conduct of the evaluation and the approach, content and tone of the report. Although addressed implicitly in the previous discussion, the following is a brief summary response.

The existence of clarity and general consensus with regard to program objectives.

Despite the diverse nature of the ProMedia program and the sometimes confusing nature of the results planning process, there is a good understanding of basic program objectives and broad agreement among key decision makers with regard to fundamental program priorities. At the same time, some of the nuances with respect to goals and priorities (e.g. impact on citizens versus regional diversification; quality of news versus organizational sustainability) need further discussion and elaboration if resources are to be programmed in an optimal manner.

A self-learning capacity and an ability to be adaptive, flexible and responsive to individual country situations and to changing conditions and opportunities.

ProMedia (IREX, Freedom House and USAID together) have demonstrated a capacity to make adaptive adjustments in approach, structure and personnel. The decentralized field structure with strong Resident Advisors ensures responsiveness to country situations. IREX has made positive efforts to create a learning capacity and to counter balance the strong field structure while maintaining its energy. However, more analytical work needs to be done to understand what works, to deepen understanding of the role of the media in these transitional societies and the link between the work of the media and democracy and the public policy process.

The existence of an integrating strategic framework that provides guidance and coherence to the individual components and helps managers make day to day decisions.

The current program has a tendency to diversify and splinter and despite agreement on basic goals, ProMedia would benefit from a tighter consensus on strategic priorities at the program

and country level.

The technical and managerial competence of the primary program decision makers.

Program managers are of exceptionally high quality — technically qualified, highly motivated and effective at their work.

The existence of attitudes and systems that ensure reasonably open, interactive and constructive communication.

The four-way management structure is cumbersome and difficult but probably necessary. USAID/Washington and IREX work well together and IREX and USAID field missions have developed good relations and have overcome a difficult transition. The communications process will need constant care and attention to ensure that it remains open.

Compatibility between the management structure and operating framework and program goals and content.

The inherent nature of ProMedia — the content of the program, the type of people who manage it, the values that reside in media organizations — necessitate a decentralized, flexible, country based structure with senior media professionals as was done.

VI. ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

1. Cooperative Agreement Format

The ProMedia program is funded by a cooperative agreement that permits substantial USAID involvement in program management, as opposed to a grant which is designed to support the activities of an organization with little direct USG involvement — or a contract which is designed to obtain specified services for the USG. A fundamental issue for the ProMedia program is whether USAID should attempt to design and manage a media program and implement it through a cooperative agreement (or contract) or whether grant funds should be given to an independent organization with little direct USAID intervention. Several of those who were interviewed for this evaluation indicated strong support for a grant mechanism on the basis that substantial government involvement in the implementation of a media program is inherently inappropriate in view of the traditional independence of the media. Under this preference, USAID would support and “buy into” the capability and programs of a media organization without authority to direct or manage that program.

The evaluation team itself had mixed views with regard to this issue with the most knowledgeable media professional believing that a grant mechanism, with minimal USAID oversight, was desirable. Arguments in favor of a *grant* are:

Takes advantage of established competence and builds on that ability leaving lasting capacity in place.

Buffers the US Government from the accusation that it is behaving inappropriately by working with indigenous media organizations.

Is probably cheaper and certainly easier to manage — provided, of course, that the rules of grant relationships are followed.

Arguments in favor of a cooperative agreement (or a contract) are:

Takes advantage of synergies with other USAID programs.

Ensures a focused and sustained approach derived from a guiding strategy.

Provides an instrument for the legitimate pursuit of US foreign policy goals.

Reflects the fact that by and large local capacity to run a media program of this complexity is not available.

On balance the evaluation team would opt for continuation of the cooperative agreement format at least for the next few years while at the same time working to build local institutional capacity so that the program can be eventually turned over to indigenous organizations as is being successfully done in Hungary. Preference for the cooperative agreement instrument also reflects a belief that the political sensitivity of many of the ProMedia country programs will inevitably invite involvement from State and USAID and that to plan otherwise is unrealistic.

2. Relations Between Freedom House and IREX

This Report will not attempt to draw a conclusion with regard to the content (or potential legal issues) relating to the dispute between Freedom House and IREX. To a significant extent, this issue has little to do with program substance. However, there are component pieces of the issue that may be relevant to the future structure of the program. These points have been alluded to or noted elsewhere in this Report and are summarized below:

Effective institutional partnerships depend heavily on a belief that there is a basic alignment of strategic approach that does not appear to exist in this instance. The IREX approach to ProMedia was to build strong field offices, recruit professional media experts, delegate as much authority as reasonable to the field and channel the creativity of journalists and Resident Advisors into building indigenous institutional capacity. The Freedom House approach is perceived as giving greater emphasis to the identification and development of key individuals with a strong emphasis on the organization's established capacity to manage internships, study tour programs and a US volunteer program to accomplish this objective.

A consortium arrangement may be inappropriate and problematic for the ProMedia program. Particularly where there is a different program philosophy and approach, the inherent management problems of overseeing a program as diverse and complex as ProMedia may prove insurmountable.

Finally, after reviewing the extensive documentation, the evaluation team believes:

That the tone of antagonism and involvement of outside participants has grown far beyond the

level that would be normally warranted by a dispute of this relatively minor nature.

That the basic issues are not difficult to resolve, and could and should have been handled by the participants themselves (or through mediation/arbitration) without outside intervention or public display.

That the issue should be resolved not on the basis of a formula or by dismantling existing program structures and relationships but on the basis of determining how each of the two participants can most effectively support achievement of program goals. This rather simple and straightforward consideration appears to have been ignored during the loud and lengthy negotiation process.

3. *Specific Design Issues*

During this evaluation and, in particular, with respect to a review of the results framework for the program, several “trade off” issues emerged involving the location of the appropriate balance point between alternative program objectives. They are listed and briefly discussed in this evaluation because they are important to program redesign.

Informed citizenry vs. viable organizations — Within each country, how should ProMedia balance between an emphasis on increasing the number of informed citizens as opposed to increasing the number of viable media organizations? The former suggests working with large organizations in heavily populated areas and implies considerable attention on the content and quality of news and public affairs print and broadcasting. The latter suggests selection of organizations most likely to benefit from management training and organizational consultations. While in the long run there is presumably a positive correlation between these two approaches, it is less clear that it exists in the short term. While unlikely, an exclusive emphasis on organizational capacity could result in a large number of healthy media outlets with very little impact on public opinion. In reality, both objectives need to be considered and appropriately balanced.

Viability of individual organizations vs. viability of the media industry — ProMedia gives considerable attention to the importance of sustainability. The dilemma is whether to focus primarily on individual organizations at high unit cost and risk or on the industry through association building and network strengthening. The media industry is dynamic and fluid and assistance to single organizations may be wasted as a consequence of competition. But exclusive concentration on associations will forego opportunities to work with “winners and stars” and/or to preserve media organizations that may be the target of repressive government action.

Better management vs. better news reporting — Will better management and more sophisticated marketing necessarily relate to more and better coverage of public affairs and a higher level of news broadcasting? In general the evaluation team was struck by the large quantity of news coverage in television, radio and print despite the higher expense of acquiring this information. The team also noted the frequent lack of business acumen and an inclination to avoid careful scrutiny of “bottom line” considerations. As noted above, many in the media in Central Europe are in the profession because it has an allure, not to make a profit. The issue for

ProMedia is whether hard headed business training will ultimately result in a more informed public.

Academic vs. on the job journalist training — Is more and better school based journalism education really needed or is “on the job” training preferable, more cost effective and appropriate for the US government to be providing?

Newspapers vs. TV — The problem facing ProMedia in all these countries is where to spend the money, and in what shares? A lot more people watch TV than read newspapers. Newspapers carry far more solid information than TV and, as one observer noted, the print media tends to “set the agenda” for other media forms. Thus the issue is whether the goal is to influence a mass audience or to influence opinion makers.

4. Improved Citizen Participation in the Democratic Process

The Scope of Work for this evaluation asked that the team report comment on the extent to which the development of the independent media sector is contributing to improving citizen participation in the democratic process. This is a tall order and it would be unrealistic for the evaluation team to attempt to draw conclusions that are empirically reliable and scientifically defensible. However, on the basis of five country visits, the Team developed the following impressions that provide a partial response to the question:

Despite government competition, an onerous legal structure, inadequate First amendment protections and lagging economies, the media in Croatia, Romania and Hungary are full of energy and manifest a strong potential for growth. On the basis of a selective sampling, media leaders in these countries tend to be young, dynamic, highly motivated and fundamentally optimistic about the future. While somewhat less obvious, the media in Slovakia and Ukraine also manifest many of these positive attributes.

Readership, viewership and listenership in all countries visited for this Report are increasing. While the numbers vary and the data are not dramatically impressive, the overall trend is very positive.

The amount of time and space devoted to news coverage and news analysis in countries visited for this evaluation is surprisingly large. While the quality of news coverage may be poor and the perspective may be frequently biased by political intent, the amount of news coverage available to citizens is significant and increasing.

Although hard data is not available, on the basis of anecdotal discussion it was clear that investment funds are continuing to flow into media enterprise. Thus, despite near government monopolies, poor distribution networks, low readership and viewership, media business leaders are making market judgments that this is a sector in which to invest for a profitable return on capital.

The original RFA for the ProMedia program introduced the need for media strengthening in Central Europe by noting that “...five years after the dramatic end of Communism, too many media in the region — especially outside the capitals, — continue struggling along in an in between world: half free,

unprofitable, demoralized, dependent, living hand to mouth, uncertain whether they have a future.” Drawing on experience gained from five field visits the evaluation team would now respond that while many organizations are still struggling, some are successful and behave quite freely, quite a few are profitable, only a few are demoralized and rarely do these organizations live “from hand to mouth.” More importantly, while there are immense problems and constraints, virtually none of the media leaders interviewed for this evaluation reached the dismal conclusion that their organization or media in general “lacked a future”.

VII. PRIMARY CONCLUSIONS

1. **Weak management capacity is an impediment to the development of a responsible and effective media and progress toward democratic governance. ProMedia activities are directly relevant to progress in this area.** While US government funded media programs are perceived as controversial by some American organizations, those who are receiving assistance do not share this concern.
2. **The ProMedia program is country specific, complex, highly differentiated and heavily reliant on the unique skills and experience of Resident Advisors who have come out of the media industry.** Because of its political overtones, the program tends to attract a high degree of interest from State. While this need not be problematic, it does necessitate the design of mechanisms that will ensure clear communications and the efficient resolution of differences when these arise.
3. **The decision made by IREX and USAID/ENI gradually to convert the program to a “field driven” approach was correct and needs to be sustained and if possible strengthened.** The negative consequences — diluted central control, diversity, lack of comparability — is more than offset by the benefits that derive from programs rooted in country conditions and reality. The capacity for some degree of inter-country coordination can be maintained without undercutting the basic principle that day to day decision making and long term strategy is country based.
4. **Deviations from the original design set forth in the RFA have in general been well-justified adaptations reflecting experience gained.** At the same time, many of the admonitions set forth in that original document are still valid although in a different management context. Specifically, the need for strategy, the desirability of a sustained and concentrated approach, and the key importance of better management, business strengthening and support for associations.
5. **An important conclusion of this evaluation is that country based planning needs to be enhanced and a greater effort need to be made to develop a clear integrating strategy for each country program.** ²⁴ **Specifically, the implementing management team should**

²⁴ In their response to the initial draft, USAID/ENI/DGSR points out that ProMedia already has a country based work planning process and that it is very difficult to plan beyond 6-8 months. In a limited sense, the evaluation team concurs with both points — there is a work planning process and work planning beyond 6 months is difficult. At the same time, the team believes that the country programs need to have a clearer sense of strategic objective in order to help them set priorities. While the results framework exercise helps identify the “why” and the “what for”, it does not address the “how”. If anything, the evaluation team feels there is too much current attention to

consider the design of a participatory planning process that can be adjusted to each country and that would include the Washington staff, implementing field staff, USAID/mission officials and in some instances representatives from important media institutions. The centrifugal pull and the danger of scatteration is very real and it is important to establish realistic parameters to ensure a sufficient concentration of resources to make a difference. More and better country based planning and the development of a multi-year game plan does not mean a loss of management independence, creativity or adaptive flexibility. To the contrary, a well-designed planning process will enhance these attributes by establishing clarity and strengthening confidence.

6. **In a related vein, more needs to be done give the program coherence, knit together disparate elements, integrate lessons learned and develop a stronger central analytical capacity to address some of the important trade off issues.** This does not mean a return to a centralized model or a reduction in the freedom of country programs. It does, however, imply an allocation of modest additional resources to such things as planning retreats, staff conferences, commissioning of evaluations, preparation of case studies and “lessons learned” and the development of meaningful program-wide tracking information both within individual countries and across the program that will give managers a clearer picture of program emphasis and provide a basis for long term planning.
7. **A second central conclusion is that a simultaneous effort should be made to shape the ProMedia program so that it is more *programmatic* in concept, design and application.** While there will always be important targets of opportunity, the effectiveness of the program would be greater if in general the individual interventions were linked to obtain cumulative effect. In the case of business training this could mean a series of workshops that are sequenced and linked to stages of organizational capacity. In the case of organization building, a programmatic approach suggests initial preparation of an assessment plan perhaps as the outcome of a workshop with a subsequent phasing of consultations.
8. **In general, the evaluation team would support efforts to simplify, consolidate and focus program content. In this regard, the team concludes that business training and improved management should emerge more clearly as the primary focus area.** The reasoning for this emphasis that: it is an approach that leaves behind an institutional framework; it is an area where AID has a strong, established comparative advantage, and there is a clear and undisputed need.²⁵
9. **The evaluation team concludes that association building should be the second primary focus area.** The reasoning for this emphasis is: associations have broad, systemic impact; they pursue multiple objectives including better management, better journalism and a favorable legal

operational planning and not enough attention to long term strategic priorities. The team is also aware of how easy it is to admonish for clearer strategy and how difficult it is to construct optimal approaches in a highly fluid situation.

²⁵ The evaluation team does not want to leave the impression that this emphasis involves a dramatic departure from what ProMedia is currently doing. The team does believe that within the very broad and general area of institutional strengthening, ProMedia can be more clearly and sharply focused on subordinate categories and can develop more sequential and integrated approaches.

and statutory environment.

10. **IREX has been serious and conscientious in attempting to get the most practical benefit from USAID's results planning framework.** Despite the resistance and some of the methodological drawbacks, the effort to use the results framework as a management tool should be continued. This is particularly important in view of the central conclusion that more attention needs to be paid to country planning.
11. **All ProMedia countries should be encouraged to develop exit plans.** In part this helps guard against the uncertainties of the budget process but it also helps in thinking through priorities and allocating resources in an optimal fashion. Because exit-planning focuses on what will be left behind, it tends to encourage greater emphasis on sustainable results.
12. **The evaluation team concludes that greater and more explicit attention needs to be paid to the design of sustainable assistance strategies.** The team is well aware that admonitions with respect to sustainability are "apple pie and motherhood". However, the preceding conclusions regarding country planning, the design of a more programmatic approach, attention to exit planning and greater attention to the practical benefit of the results framework should all help in this regard.
13. **Continue to simplify operation of USAID management structure.** While much has been done to improve communications and clarify management roles, continued attention should be given to clarifying USAID/Washington/Field relations to avoid the inevitable problems that arise in complex organizational structures where there is a propensity for duplication, overlap and the misperception of intent.
14. **Long-term program design should concentrate on indigenous capacity and ultimate termination of a direct USAID assistance effort.** Implicit in this evaluation is the view that it is appropriate for the US government to be funding and managing a media program based on the reasonable hypothesis that these programs are meeting a significant and unfilled need and that they have a positive impact on the long term prospects for democracy in Central and Eastern Europe. A corollary of this hypothesis is that the US government should not be implementing a media program where indigenous capacity exists to do what ProMedia is doing. Thus in the case of Hungary, program support to the Journalism Foundation is being reduced and will ultimately phase out. The evaluation team concludes that this long term evolutionary model needs to be deliberately inserted into the next iteration of the program to encourage the building of local capacity and to focus long term strategic attention on what should be left behind when ProMedia ends.
15. **Cooperative Agreement mechanism should be maintained.** On balance the evaluation team concludes that a cooperative agreement mechanism should be retained for the next iteration of the program.
16. **Downplay importance of a consortium arrangement.** For reasons set forth in the Report, the evaluation team concludes that a consortium arrangement should not be given heavy emphasis in the next RFA.

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. Country based strategic planning should be enhanced and a greater effort should be made to develop a clear integrating strategy for each country program.**
- 2. A simultaneous effort should be made to shape the ProMedia program so that it is more *programmatic* in concept, design and application.**
- 3. Modest additional resources should be programmed for strengthening analytical capacity, organizational learning and in establishing a stronger programmatic architecture.**
- 4. Business training and improved management should emerge as the primary ProMedia focus area. “Special initiatives” should decline in relative importance.**
- 5. Association building should be the second primary focus area.**
- 6. The effort to use the results framework as a management tool should be continued but the overall conceptual structure should be reviewed with respect to its utility to program managers.**
- 7. All ProMedia countries should be encouraged to develop exit plans.**
- 8. Greater and more explicit attention needs to be paid to the design of sustainable assistance strategies.**
- 9. The operation of the USAID management structure should continue to be simplified.**
- 10. Long-term program design should concentrate on indigenous capacity and ultimate termination of a direct USAID assistance effort.**
- 11. The Cooperative Agreement mechanism should be maintained.**

ATTACHMENTS

ATTACHMENT #1: COUNTRY REPORTS

ATTACHMENT #2: ACTIVITY LIST

ATTACHMENT #3: SCOPE OF WORK

ATTACHMENT #4: INTERVIEW GUIDE

ATTACHMENT #5: INDIVIDUALS INTERVIEWED

ATTACHMENT # 1

PROMEDIA PROGRAM * COUNTRY PROFILES

The following country reports were prepared during the course of the evaluation and are designed to illustrate and provide a tangible basis for the generic points that are discussed in the body of the report.

Individual members of the evaluation team prepared these country reports. Individual team members did not visit all countries and, as a consequence, these individual reports do not necessarily represent the views of the entire team.

CROATIAN PROGRAM

Country Context

Croatia went from Communism to war in 1991-1995 almost without a pause. It was not until the Dayton Agreement and the end of the war that the slow process of building democracy could begin.

The ruling party controls State Radio and State TV and has the only electronic media with a nationwide reach. Indirectly, the ruling party, through its members, or relatives or friends, also controls about 90 percent of local electronic media.

Four years after establishing the legal framework for private broadcasting, Croatia still has no statewide independent TV. The government has promised a concession for a private, state-wide TV channel later this year, but the size of the Croatian market makes the viability of a fourth national channel very unlikely.

State TV is the main source of information for about 75 percent of the population. The technical quality of programs is very high and content is interesting, with a large portion of foreign, especially US-produced programming. News programs are biased towards the ruling party. State TV enjoys special privileges compared to the independent TV stations. It receives all subscription fees for every television set and it does not pay taxes. State TV also attracts as much as 80 percent of total in country advertising revenue, leaving little for independent television stations.

The parliament's ruling majority controls appointments to the Telecommunications Council, which grants private radio and TV concessions and broadcast licenses. The process of granting the concessions is not transparent and it is misused to further the interests of the ruling party. The rules are such that it is always possible to find some infringement of regulations to take a station off the air.

The print media have difficulties arranging distribution and finding printing presses. They are exposed to legal harassment and are denied fair shares of the advertising revenue.

The favorite form of harassment of independent media, especially print, is lawsuits for defamation and insult. Losing only a small number of suits can financially ruin an independent media company.

Program Description

ProMedia in Croatia offers consulting, training, association building, legal assistance and indirectly also classes in journalism. It also provides one-time equipment grants and matching funding with other donors.

In assisting print media, ProMedia has focused on two independent newspapers—*Feral Tribune* and *Novi List*. ProMedia has helped the latter, a daily newspaper based in Rijeka, with plans to become a national publication. *Feral Tribune*, an independent paper founded in 1995 and considered by the government to be a thorn in its side, is faced with economic hardship. Although its circulation is 65,000, it lacks advertising revenue. And it is often subject to defamation lawsuits, mostly brought by government officials.

To help alleviate financial problems for *Feral Tribune* and other newspapers, ProMedia has bought computer software so that *Novi List*, *Glas Istre* and *Feral Tribune* can transmit page layouts via the Internet for printing at the *Novi List* printing house in Rijeka.

Six of top Croatian media lawyers were sent on a US study tour to broaden their legal knowledge and improve their ability to successfully defend journalists against defamation suits. ProMedia is planning to work with other international donors to establish a fund administered by the Croatian Journalists Association to cover the lawyers' fees.

The most ambitious and risky ProMedia project in Croatia is the creation of a fiber-optic television and radio network. The state-owned Telecommunications Company has installed a fiber-optic cable linking all major towns and cities in the country. ProMedia's plan is to lease use of the cable system to carry programs of five independent television stations and as many as 25 radio broadcasters, in place of over-the-air transmission. Programming would be less expensive, opportunities for cooperation and sharing would be improved and the new system would circumvent a government ban on television and radio station networks. The risk comes from possible government retaliation and the difficulties inherent in getting independent entities to cooperate. On balance, the evaluation team felt the large potential benefits were justified.

ProMedia has assisted radio stations in Eastern Slavonia since the region reverted from Serbia to Croatian in January, 1998, by providing an American expert for training and consulting.

The Embassy is more operationally involved in the ProMedia program than is normally the case, reflecting Croatia's political importance to the United States. While the management structure is cumbersome, relations between participating entities appear to be good. In particular, the evaluation team noted the constructive relationship with the USAID project officer and the ability of all concerned to work through different program priorities. The resident adviser is a highly energetic, seasoned media professional, who travels often to meet local media staff. Information thus gathered forms his needs assessments that are translated into work plans.

Results to Date

ProMedia has had extensive, substantive involvement with the Croatian Journalists Association (CJA) in helping that organization develop a firm financial base, and developing training programs. CJA is a potentially very strong and influential organization and in a good position to improve the environment

for Slovak media.

On a number of occasions the Resident Advisor was able to draw on his wealth of international contacts and arrange visits by experts in various media fields. They worked as trainers, lecturers and consultants employed both by ProMedia and other organizations operating in Croatia.

The chances for continued survival of *Feral Tribune* and *Glas Istre* have been improved through ProMedia facilitated arrangement for printing of these newspapers at the *Novi List* printing plant in Rieka. Both of the publications benefit from the lower cost of printing and favorable contract. The vulnerability to government reprisal and the dependence of *Feral Tribune* and *Glas Istre* on state-owned and operated printing companies has been greatly reduced. Technical assistance from ProMedia made it possible for *Glas Istre* to start sending all the information necessary for printing electronically and consequently, *Glas Istre* was able to extend its deadline, gaining an important advantage in competing against the state owned newspapers.

ProMedia's initiative in the establishment of the fiber optic network had an important side effect of strengthening the Association of Independent Television Stations by giving the independent television stations yet another reason to join this association.

As a result of ProMedia's continuous help, the independent newspaper *Novi List* has grown through the acquisition of and through cooperative agreements with several local newspapers and thus has progressed towards its goal of becoming the first independent daily newspaper with a nationwide reach. Once this goal is realized, *Novi List* will become a strong alternative to the state owned and state influenced news publications that currently dominate.

ProMedia also contributed to the increase in the professional quality of the *Novi List* by funding consultations on the subjects of writing strategy, ethical guidelines, and in the use of modern photography equipment and methods.

The information obtained in the surveys and market research supported by ProMedia makes it possible for independent radio stations, television stations and newspapers to target advertising and content to their audiences. Paying for market research and surveys is not something that cash strapped media outlets tend to do on their own. However once the companies have been convinced of the financial benefits that such services bring they tend to continue on their own.

ProMedia's assistance and coordination contributed to the formation of the Independent Radio Association. It is hoped that the membership in the association will lead to the reduction of the costs, increase in the advertising revenue and that the stations will be more protected from the hostile government actions.

As a direct result of ProMedia assistance, four radio stations in Eastern Slavonia region of Croatia were privatized and are all now registered as private companies. (The control over Eastern Slavonia was transferred from the United Nations Transitional Administration to Croat government in January 1998.)

Together with other foreign donors ProMedia funded an equipment grant for the purchase of translation equipment that is now used at a CJA operated Press Center. Owning the equipment rather

than having to rent it every time significantly reduces the cost of events with foreign participation.

Preliminary Findings

There is widespread awareness of ProMedia on the independent media scene. It is seen as a positive force. Experts provided by ProMedia get consistently high marks for their professional knowledge.

- Independent newspapers, including *Novi List* and *Feral Tribune*, continue to serve the public with independent news and information. Independent newspapers could not survive without the support of international donors, including ProMedia. *Novi List* has progressed significantly in its goal of becoming a national daily newspaper.
- The fiber-optic network has been embraced by all concerned. The development of the network continues as planned. Software to run the network has been designed and is ready to be tested. All of the necessary hardware has been identified and all of it is now available inside Croatia.
- Six independent TV stations, with the assistance of ProMedia, formed the National Television Association. The association will strengthen the position of individual television stations when buying programming and in pressing the government for reform of media regulations. ProMedia also provided assistance to a group of independent radio stations that have formed an association. ProMedia continues to work with Croatian Journalists Association as it expands activities.
- The ProMedia staff, consisting of a resident adviser and a local consultant, is too small to continue activities at the present pace without losing control over some. The situation should be remedied by the planned hiring of an office manager.
- ProMedia has agreed to support establishment of a National News Bureau in Zagreb, an organization that would take on some functions of a news agency, given that STINA, while independent, is not a fully functioning news service.

Preliminary Issues

- There is no independent television station in Zagreb, the capital and the largest city in Croatia. Both USAID and ProMedia recognize a strong need for an independent broadcaster, but there is as yet no plan on how to establish such a station. It may be an issue beyond the reach of ProMedia.
- State TV is fully controlled by the ruling party. One of the three state channels should be privatized, but there seems to be very little movement in this direction. Can anything be done by ProMedia? Would it be better for ProMedia to stay out of this issue as well?
- The management and the oversight of the ProMedia program is complicated. The chain of command and the division of responsibilities among the four players (ProMedia in Zagreb and Washington and USAID in both cities) are not entirely clear.
- The fiber-optic cable network is a very important, ambitious and complicated undertaking, but it is a risk that should be taken. It must be carefully monitored. Personality and communications

problems are less predictable and possibly more threatening than technical matters. It seems preferable to have an experienced person act as a project manager until the fiber-optic network moves past its childhood.

- ProMedia activities in Croatia cover broad areas. Do all the segments of the program receive adequate attention? Is there a tendency to focus more on new projects and less on follow-through and maximum-payoff from the projects already in place?
- Is shifting training to the Croatian Journalists Association a good idea? Should all of the ProMedia-supported media-related training be done by CJA as seems to be the trend, or should ProMedia have its own strategic plan and implement the training? In terms of sustainability, the CJA could continue programs when ProMedia leaves the country.

ROMANIAN PROGRAM²⁶

Country Context

Like other countries of Eastern Europe that fell beneath Soviet domination after World War II, Romania shows the scars and bears the legacy of years of economic mismanagement and political oppression under Nicolae Ceausescu's authoritarian regime employing the secret police and armed forces.

Inevitably, the media were swept into the vortex of Ceausescu's misrule. Ceaseless propaganda about advances of Romania's standard of living and industrial and agricultural development defied the reality that Romanians could witness with their own eyes. The media thus fell into disrepute, an institution not to be trusted or believed.

Following the collapse of the Communist state and after the first few years of new found freedom, it became apparent that the old Communist party apparatus, in league with organized criminal elements and government bureaucrats, had essentially seized both political and economic power in the country.

For the media, this meant the obvious. Central television and radio broadcasting and the central newspapers, even if not overtly connected to power institutions, have come under their sway or that of special financial interests. Much of the local and regional media have remained mentally mired in journalistic habits that exclude critical thought, factual information and skepticism toward governmental authority.

Program Description

The ProMedia program was undertaken first by the National Forum Foundation and then by Freedom

²⁶ Freedom House reviewed an earlier version of this short country report and "demanded" a total re-write to accommodate a number of concerns. The evaluation team has reviewed the Romanian report and has corrected errors of fact and made modifications in interpretation in several instances. The Team has not been able to accommodate all of the Freedom House concerns. The criticisms that are set forth in the following paragraphs are moderate and in many instances apply to other ProMedia countries as well. The Freedom House approach to ProMedia in Romania - - as could be expected - - is an approach that is unique to Freedom House. This is neither good nor bad but it is different than the approach taken in other ProMedia countries.

House, when the Forum merged with that organization.

The objective of the program is to develop “professional and financially independent media”. Intermediate results include “higher quality product”, more “useful information”, “improved professional standards”, increased advertising revenues and more effective management.

The program focuses on building sound, bottom line oriented, managerial competence. Activities include internships for media managers in the United States, study tours to Central Europe and direct consultation and provision of advisory services. Freedom House sponsors workshops on media management, instruction in journalism, targeted assistance to individual organizations in media management, the development of training material and the design of an award program. A recent initiative has been creation of an audit bureau of circulation.

Since inception, three Resident Advisors, all with extensive and impressive media credentials have managed the program.

Preliminary Findings

- Despite significant managerial needs, the absence of a structure of professional associations and the existence of potentially repressive legislation, the media in Romania shows vitality and an emergent sense of possibility. Significant funds are being invested, young people are attracted to and are entering the media profession, and the quality of broadcasting (especially television) is high and improving. Progress is particularly evident at the national level and with larger, Bucharest based organizations.
- The emphasis on strengthening practical, bottom line oriented business skills is appropriate and effective. Both media professionals and outside observers felt the media needed to improve basic business skills. Despite periodic complaints, the media in Romania can be financially viable if it learns effective marketing techniques.
- The Romanian ProMedia program is well known and respected. A hallmark of the Romanian program has been the establishment of a fabric of high level contacts and relationships with senior media managers and top level journalists, particularly in Bucharest. Many of these individuals have had study tours or internship under Freedom House auspices and there is a feeling of collegiality and shared experience.
- Freedom House has successfully drawn on and used its core expertise in managing US based study tours and in placing US volunteers overseas in operating the ProMedia program in Romania. The interns and study tour participants²⁷ that were interviewed were very enthusiastic about their US experience and in general felt the program was effectively administered.
- As is the case in other ProMedia countries, ProMedia program coverage in Romania is wide and diverse and appears to be frequently driven by attractive opportunities and emergent issues. While this can lead to significant success — as appears to be the case with the Audit Bureau initiative —

²⁷ While there were some criticisms including poor management and coordination, too brief a time period, poor work placement, in general, the participant evaluations filled out for Freedom House are quite supportive and positive.

and may make sense during the start up phase, the evaluation team felt that it was important to identify a clearer set of selection criteria to guide future program choices. As is broadly true with all ProMedia programs, without a tighter guiding framework, the program has a tendency toward splinteration and blurring of focus.

- The current results framework that was given to the evaluation team is very general and the intermediate results are framed in a manner that makes even anecdotal measurement difficult. While Freedom House and the USAID mission deserve credit for attempting to prepare the framework, it is not clear that at this level of generality it is particularly useful to managers and in fact the current Resident Advisor made it clear that the results exercise was handled by headquarters and was of little practical relevance to program management.
- Like other ProMedia programs, Romania has had considerable difficulty developing indicators of progress against the results framework. (While some indicators have been developed for print, it has proved difficult to do the same for TV.) A particular difficulty has been measuring qualitative improvements in management in media content. Simple increases in the number of publications or broadcasting stations does not adequately measure effective impact and long run organizational viability.
- In a related vein, there is a lack of analytical data to shed light on program priorities, direction and emphasis — a situation that is certainly not unique to Romania. While the individual activities appeared logical and relevant, well managed and well received, it was difficult for the evaluation team to develop a clear feel for overall strategic direction and emphasis. For example, after a week of interviews, the team developed a strong impression that the program was Bucharest based.²⁸ Interviews with the USAID mission echoed this judgment and underlined the Mission's hope that the program would increasingly focus on local and regional media.²⁹ Subsequently, the evaluation team was informed by Freedom House that the analysis was incorrect and that the program was fully diversified and reflected regional needs in a balanced manner. While the data put forth by Freedom House in defense of its position is appreciated, the situation underscores the importance of future efforts to develop and track a reliable database so that USAID and Freedom House can make informed judgments about program direction.
- It is the Freedom House view that the Romanian program has been underfunded in comparison to other ProMedia programs and in relationship to the importance of Romania to US foreign policy. It was difficult for the evaluation team to form a judgment with regard to the overall allocation of budget resources among countries and this subject was outside the team's mandate — although as noted below, the team did feel that the administrative budget for Romania should be increased. However, the issue underscores the importance of developing meaningful trendline data for the

²⁸ Freedom House produces statistics comparing days, weeks or months of "targeted assistance" for local and central media to suggest that it is not ignoring the regional press. However, the thrust of Freedom House reports of its own work and discussion of the work gave the evaluation team the clear impression that Freedom House to date has given primary thought and attention to major urban (chiefly Bucharest) television and newspapers.

²⁹ There are 130 television stations licensed in Romania and 250 radio stations--almost all of them regional. Of the roughly 120 daily newspapers, about 100 are regional. All of the 300 weekly newspapers are regional. If the ProMedia program does begin to spend more time and money on regional media more than it has, a new assessment of newspapers or television stations would be in order, to select newspapers and television company that show best promise of development as independent, financially viable media.

program that will help managers assess the pros and cons of alternative funding levels. While anecdotal information is helpful in assessing results in-country, it is not particularly helpful when rigorous comparison is important.

- While the evaluation team was impressed with the experience, competence and commitment of the in-country Freedom House staff, the team felt the program is understaffed, and poorly equipped. The current Resident Advisor is part time and the two person staff are asked to manage the ProMedia program as well as other Freedom House projects. A great deal of time is consumed by detailed, routine bookkeeping, an immense amount of record keeping, and filing of receipts that could be assigned to a bookkeeper in order to allow the staff to focus on substance. In comparison to other ProMedia offices, the Romanian headquarters were cramped and poorly furnished and office equipment was minimal and of poor quality. The team felt that this situation should be rectified as soon as possible.
- A considerable amount of the work planning, results framework planning and long-term strategic thinking for Romania appears to be done by Freedom House headquarters, while day to day implementation is handled by in-country staff.³⁰ Thus, the Romanian staff had very limited knowledge of annual budget amounts and no knowledge of future funding plans or of USAID's stated intent to continue funding the program for at least one and perhaps two more years nor, as noted above, has the current Resident Advisor been involved in preparation of the results framework. (In a related vein the USAID Mission voiced a desire for better communication and more effective coordination with the ProMedia project.) In general, the evaluation team felt that more authority to negotiate and set program priorities and budget levels should be delegated to the field office. While the current approach does not adversely affect day to day management and operations, the team believes that in the future it will be important to set aside more time for systematic and strategic thinking about where the program should be heading and to more directly involve local staff to a greater extent than currently appears to be the case.
- In general, the evaluation team felt that impact would be enhanced if the strategic approach was disaggregated. Right now, the purpose of the ProMedia program (in the words of the Resident Advisor) is to "make the media economically viable". While this is an important integrating approach, it might be helpful to break this down into subordinate program strategies. In the area of management for example, ProMedia might develop a sequential set of modular training interventions that would be targeted against a pre-defined group of regional institutions. A great deal has been accomplished and ProMedia has established a strong set of supportive relationships and has developed a sophisticated understanding of the problems facing Romanian media. This provides a good base for developing a set of tightly focussed program strategies.
- The evaluation team felt that Freedom House should examine the marginal value of US based internships as opposed to Central European training. Several journalists we interviewed felt that experience in Central Europe would be equally if not more beneficial since the policy issues and level of organizational maturity was comparable and costs were considerably less. Others felt that the US experience had a high payoff because of the very positive expectations that Romanians bring to a US study experience. In general, the evaluation team had difficulty assessing the utility

³⁰ Freedom House strongly disagrees with this assessment and states that the "...program is designed on the ground by the RA in Romani in consultation with the mission and the Washington office....It is not "top down".

of out of country training as opposed to workshops and targeted assistance performed in-country. Internships have a strong individual benefit while technical assistance has an organizational pay-off. What is needed is a clearer set of selection criteria together with a set of ground-rules that protects against the potential disadvantages of study tour/internship programs noted below.

- Potential problems with US internships include: preference for English speakers, an inevitable orientation toward a more affluent and well connected applicant, the danger that the visit will become a tourist experience, lack of workplace relevance, the danger of poor placement and the difficulty of ensuring that the individual is placed back into a position at or above the level that he or she left. ProMedia does little counseling or training in media law issues and journalism education. The Washington law firm of Covington and Burling, at the request of the United States Information Service in Bucharest, produced a thorough analysis of contemporary Romanian media law that outlined restrictions on a free press. However, Freedom House staff seemed unaware of the report, as did the Bucharest USAID mission. This fact alone gave the evaluation team the impression that reform of and education in what all agree is repressive Romanian media law are not high on the Freedom House agenda. There is no mention of media law in the most recent Freedom House semi-annual report.
- Computers are now an essential tool of the media in both news production and management. It seems apparent that in the next five to 10 years, the Internet will give all Romanian media immediate access to information in all forms — sound, photographs, words and film — portending another revolution in the way that information is packaged and distributed. The evaluation team believes that Freedom House may wish to devote greater attention to this important area.
- Although some Romanian media, partly through ProMedia assistance, have become more professional and profitable, the evaluation team found it impossible to assess whether, as a result, Romanian citizens participate more actively in a democratic process. The correlation between abundant community information supplied by the press and the participation of voters in their government is a very broad one, indeed. So many factors intrude on the relationship between press and people that it is difficult to establish a clear-cut cause and effect. In Romania, it is much too early to even begin to ascertain whether Freedom House ProMedia programs have had an impact on the democratic process.

UKRAINIAN PROGRAM

Country Context

Ukraine once again regained its independence from 1991 when an overwhelming majority of Ukraine's 50-million population voted for statehood.

In the few years following independence, Ukrainians have had to acknowledge that the government has let internal politics and contest for power take precedence over economic and democratic reform.

The result is that the overall economy continues to deteriorate. The United Nations now ranks Ukraine 102 among 174 countries in terms of standard of living, health care, education and life expectancy.

Ukrainian media express the economic mismanagement of the country, minimal managerial and

democratic reforms, the continued existence of the inefficient collective farm system, financial turbulence and widespread corruption and profiteering among an unsavory collusion of organized criminal groups and old Communist party/government officials.

Much if not most television and radio broadcasting is in the hands of the government or its political allies. An USAID-supported network of independent broadcasters demonstrates the changing situation of the electronic media. However, rather than functioning as a politically unencumbered media, Ukraine's television generally offers a placebo of game shows, sports and innocuous news. The central newspaper press, likewise dominated by special interests, is unabashedly partisan. Regional newspapers and broadcasting media, with very few exceptions, are of such poor quality and provide such abysmal public service to their audiences that they are scarcely much better than the Communist party operated press from which they evolved.

Various laws that affect journalists, and newspapers and radio and television broadcasting are so pervasive and restrictive that they have a distinct "chilling effect" on constitutional guarantees of free speech and press.

Program Description

ProMedia has worked in Ukraine for about three years, getting underway hesitantly as it established an office and staff and with the result that ProMedia has been fully operational for only two years. An outside assessment in 1996 led to a more refined media assistance program dealing with an estimated 3,000 newspapers in Ukraine, all but a handful categorized as regional and local, and published only once or twice a week. About 1,000 are openly connected to the government, and of the remaining 2,000, many are associated with central and local governments in a web of personal and financial relationships.

It is essential, before describing ProMedia work further, to note that USAID also has funded an extensive Internews program in Ukraine. An \$11 million dollar grant in 1994 helped the California-based private organization to set up state-of-the-art facilities on the outskirts of Kiev to train journalists in professional radio and television reporting. Internews receives about \$1 million annually from USAID to run this program, about equal to ProMedia's budget.

There is, then, a division of labor in Ukraine unlike that of ProMedia programs elsewhere in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Internews trains staffs of Ukraine's roughly 500 radio and television broadcasters. ProMedia focuses on the print media.

A survey of ProMedia's programs shows that there is some overlap with those of Internews. ProMedia issues a periodic bulletin with information about legal issues affecting the press, including radio and television. It also trains journalists in use of the computer, especially the Internet, a skill that is transferable to radio and television work.

Beyond these activities, ProMedia conducts conferences and seminars at its Information and Press Centers in Kiev and Simferopol to train journalists and to develop business and managerial skills, arranges study tours for journalists in Ukraine and in Central Europe, works with the Dnepropetrovsk University Faculty of Journalism in revising the core curriculum and establishing a student newspaper and supports to the extent possible associations of journalists.

Preliminary Findings

- After the expected slow start-up, the Ukraine ProMedia staff now operates an active, probing program, sufficiently flexible that it can seize the moment if an unforeseen opportunity for expanding journalism training arises.
- The Internet is quickly emerging as a valuable reference tool for journalists and will unquestionably develop as a means among all media to share real-time news, sound, photographs, film and information on legal issues, business management and marketing and advertising. ProMedia in Ukraine is providing computer/Internet training at its centers in Kiev and Simferopol, programs that the evaluation team believes will pay off handsomely in the future for Ukraine's independent media.
- A ProMedia bulletin on legal issues (issued six times a year, but soon to be issued monthly) reaches a reasonably wide audience, and provides a permanent reference for journalists who are little schooled in laws on the press, their rights under the Ukrainian Constitution and efforts of governments and officials at all levels to intimidate and silence newspapers. The bulletin is a good example of ProMedia innovation in Ukraine, and of how a small investment can generate long-term results, in this case in the education of Ukrainian journalists in an important sphere of their work.
- Within the ProMedia/Internews alliance, ProMedia tends to the broader view of journalism. It regards training and support in legal matters, ethics of journalism and journalist associations as part of the whole in developing an unbiased, solvent media in Ukraine. Internews, while engaged also in media business management training, puts emphasis on teaching journalists how to create a factual, timely, technically proficient radio or television news product. This division of labor appears to function well. And the encouragement by ProMedia of an association of independent television broadcasters suggests that there is no strict line between ProMedia and Internews that would prevent ProMedia from training electronic media journalists in the broader issues and practices of an independent press.
- ProMedia's initiative to provide a database of a ProMedia's staff photographer's work that newspapers can access through the Internet is an interesting experiment in 1) showing regional and local newspapers what good news photography looks like and 2) encouraging these often gray, dull newspapers to brighten their pages and hence, possibly, increase their circulation. One can look on the database as essentially a training program, or as an uncharacteristic attempt by ProMedia to influence the content of the Ukrainian media. The evaluation team would caution against the latter. News photographs do carry messages (is President Kuchma smiling or frowning, looking worried or content?) and it is vital that ProMedia not be seen as openly active in guiding Ukrainian media content.
- ProMedia and the USAID mission in Kiev have established a mutually respectful relationship. ProMedia staff, while not entirely enthusiastic about the cumbersome planning and reporting procedures required by USAID, nonetheless readily accept that there must be accountability of U.S. government funds.
- The regional Information and Press Center in the Crimean capital of Simferopol is clearly up and

running a year after its founding. It has the advantages of close association with regional editors and journalists, of more intimate understanding of problems of small Crimean newspapers and staffs and it can maintain frequent contacts with journalists who have gone through training sessions. The evaluation team was told that one rationale for the Center was to support a small and weak Crimean Tatar press, and hence provide an outlet for Tatar opinions that, if suppressed, might eventually burst out in political unrest. Helping the persecuted Tatars air their grievances and aspirations is, in and of itself, an admirable activity. But it strikes the evaluation team that this may not be the direct business of ProMedia—at least as the present USAID/ProMedia program is constituted.

- The stationing of an American resident adviser, with journalism experience, in Kiev to run the ProMedia program has proved to be a correct decision. An American adviser has both an understanding of the philosophic origin of the ProMedia program and practical knowledge of professional journalism to establish the program in its youthful years. At the same time, it should be noted that the ProMedia office director in Kiev and the head of the Information and Press Center in Simferopol are Ukrainian citizens. The evaluation team agrees that it is essential that Ukrainian citizens be trained in ProMedia programs, looking to the day when U.S. funding ends and such programs will be managed and USAID for by Ukrainians.

Preliminary Issues

- Establishment of the regional Information and Press Center in Simferopol has given ProMedia staff experience in operating a satellite office. This is the moment to analyze the return on a \$50,000-a-year center and whether, if the return seems reasonable, to establish one or two more centers. It is obvious from statistics that an increasing number of mostly journalists are using the Simferopol center facilities, and that satellite offices can be more cost effective in some cases in training Ukrainian journalists. Moreover, Ukraine—the largest by far of any countries where ProMedia is operating—may be the one and only case where regional ProMedia offices are justified because of the size of the country, and its ethnic and economic differences. The evaluation team believes the issue of regional offices needs further thought and discussion.
- The 1996 assessment of Ukrainian media needs described the dismal quality of the newspaper press, noting — as do more recent studies — that only about one in five adult Ukrainians read a newspaper, while the great majority turn to television for information. Thought must be given to what share of ProMedia funds is invested in the newspaper press, particularly at the regional and local levels. The evaluation team visited one regional newspaper that receives ProMedia help and that clearly is moving rapidly along the path of professional journalism and solvency. But the team also visited a small, rural newspaper, also receiving ProMedia support, that hardly merits the description newspaper and that offers little prospect of doing so in the foreseeable future. The evaluation team understands the difficulty of finding Ukrainian newspapers that seek ProMedia assistance and can benefit from it. There is always an element of risk in the ProMedia program if it is to be innovative and imaginative. Yet, this is the time to step back and consider how ProMedia funds will be invested over the next four or five years.
- ProMedia staff seem sometimes insufficiently briefed on overall USAID plans and discussions. In order for the staff in Ukraine to creatively look ahead, it must constantly be informed of any renewal of the program, estimated future budgets and alterations of goals and emphasis of the

media development plan as a whole. These matters go to the issue of an exit strategy. The ProMedia staff in Kiev obviously cannot prepare for an end to the program unless it is told when (roughly speaking) it will end.

- Four entities are involved in the ProMedia program — i.e., Washington headquarters of USAID and ProMedia, and Kiev headquarters of both. The evaluation team was told in Ukraine that efficiency would be served by devolving more authority to the local level to the extent that accountability and overall integrated planning are maintained. The issue of where decisions are made was a common one that the evaluation team encountered in its five-country assessment. ProMedia staff and local USAID mission directors tend to want authority shifted largely from Washington to the field. The evaluation team heard much the opposite view in Washington, although IREX ProMedia and USAID Washington are in full agreement that the ProMedia program in general must be field driven.

HUNGARIAN PROGRAM

Country Context

After the fall of the Communist party, the mass media continued to be viewed as a logical attribute of power. With the 1990 elections, a transformed political landscape witnessed the emergence of several strong political parties and the gradual transfer of ownership from state to private hands. Large state newspapers were privatized, mostly by foreign companies, and now all print media are in private hands. Most newspapers have some political bias depending on what party they are affiliated with, but generally the journalists are free from editorial interference.

Meanwhile, the issue of radio and TV licenses became a bone of contention among political parties. Finally, in 1996, parliament adopted a media law and created a Television and Radio Board, with one representative from each political party. The board is seriously pass the deadline on issuing local licenses, although in 1997 licenses for two national television channels were awarded to two foreign-dominated consortiums. A majority stake in the third channel, Hungarian TV 3, was purchased by Central European Media Enterprises.

Depending on how one counts them and including small village television stations, there are 150 to 160 local TV stations in Hungary, definitely too many for a nation of five million. Most of the TV stations are owned and subsidized by the local governments. Without their financial support, only a fraction of the existing local TV stations could survive.

The large number of TV stations, local government ownership, cumbersome media regulations, and low level of professionalism are the chief obstacles to a more vibrant, viable and independent television on the local level. But the heavy hand of central government controlling the content and flow of the information has vanished.

Hungary is less saturated with radio broadcasters than with TV stations. It is cheaper to start and run a radio station and in many small towns it is possible for a radio station to survive on the income from advertising.

Program Description

The ProMedia program in Hungary has been implemented since 1995 by the Center for Independent Journalism (CIJ) and constitutes about 30 percent of the Center's activity. The ProMedia segment of CIJ will end in March 1999.

The CIJ emphasizes training and its mission is to support an independent press, unbiased reporting and professional journalists. CIJ does not provide grants and cannot afford serious consulting. Nor does CIJ give legal advice.

Concentration on training was not the only possible approach the implementation of the ProMedia program could have taken in Hungary. Significant progress towards the strategic objective could have been achieved by concentrating on other areas and through the use of other methods as well. More could have been done in with more money. But considering the amount of funding that was available and considering the fact that working through CIJ provided a very cost effective alternative to setting up ProMedia's own shop, the decision to concentrate on training was correct. It is an approach that brought most bang for the buck in Hungary.

ProMedia program has evolved from a rather narrow focus on providing training for local broadcast TV journalists in basic journalistic skill, to training in basic journalism, business and management for local radio and print professionals as well.

ProMedia's method in developing programs was to begin a pilot project for field testing. The system has worked well. ProMedia also designed traveling workshops that went from city to city, offering the same content and often the same trainers.

ProMedia has drawn up a menu of media needs that includes: radio and television training in local news production; television studio work; broadcast and print media management training; election coverage workshops and the Roma program that arranges internships, trains Roma youth for jobs in print, radio and television, and in promotes more frequent and better coverage of Roma issues in the media.

Results to Date

The observations about the results achieved rely on interviews with the managers and staff of media organizations, workshop participants, other professionals knowledgeable about ProMedia activities, and on written reports authored by the trainers and the staff of CIJ in Budapest.

Overall the responses to the ProMedia workshops were very positive. The questionnaires reviewed by the evaluation team indicate a very high rate of approval. This is true both in the area of technical training and for training in the area of management and marketing.

The ProMedia program in Hungary is very cost effective. Much money has been saved by employing local staff at CIJ and by using local trainers when appropriate.

ProMedia has trained approximately 300 reporters and camerapersons in television production and news coverage. Approximately 100 radio journalists were trained in the production of news and information programming.

The impact of training was assessed during follow up sessions to which the participants brought samples of their work for evaluation. Significant improvement in professional quality was noted compared to the work samples from before the training. The evaluation team has confirmed these gains through interviews with the participants of these workshops and a visit to a local TV station in Bekescsaba. Taking into account the limitations of the low quality equipment the quality of the news and information programming at this station was very high.

ProMedia has also developed survey forms that were distributed to the workshop participants. Responses were gathered from general managers of local radio and television stations and from radio/television reporters and camerapersons. The forms examined by the evaluation team document a high level of satisfaction.

Prior to May 1998 elections ProMedia conducted three workshops in election coverage. As a result of the workshops sixteen local stations that participated in these workshops produced higher quality elections coverage than they did during the previous elections.

ProMedia training in basic principles of journalism, copy editing, and training in photojournalism is also likely to have a positive impact on the quality and accuracy of the news in local newspapers.

A series of training sessions in business management for local broadcast media and local newspapers helped the targeted media companies to acquire relevant business information and to adopt more efficient management methods which will decrease the reliance on government subsidies and increase their financial viability.

Results were less than satisfactory in the area of association building. According to the USAID Project Director and the Director of CIJ, little progress was made in association building simply because the situation was not favorable - the recipients are not ready for help. What keeps the local TV stations from uniting is a messy licensing situation. The broadcast licenses were issued under three different laws; some of them before the fall of the communism, some under interim laws right after the fall of communism, and some under the current law. While the station managers are aware of the importance of pooling their resources and the advantages of collaborating in areas of common interest, they operate under different rules. Help in this matter can not be imposed and it is better to wait until the TV station managers are ready to receive help and come up with specific needs and questions. At that point ProMedia can provide meaningful assistance.

Participants in the Roma internship program are assigned to mainstream Hungarian media outlets. The program has been successful in increasing the number of Roma journalists and giving more coverage to Roma issues in the mainstream media.

The Roma internship program started small with only 10 participants. The drop out rate was 30 percent. In the second year, 25 participants were recruited. Based on the lessons learned during the first year of the program, several modifications were made. More attention was given to the selection of the participants and more training was added to the program. As a result of these modifications the drop out rate decreased to only one person.

ProMedia has also supported training in public relations and classes on the subject of self-government for Roma NGOs at the Roma Press Center. Roma representatives from all major Roma NGOs have

participated. During the training, a dialogue is established between Roma NGOs and local media outlets. Press monitoring shows that the Roma are more active in the mainstream media and that the Roma journalists have more confidence now than two years ago.

Preliminary Findings

- The collaboration between the mission and the Resident Advisor is very good.
- Hungary is the only country where ProMedia program has been conducted with a local Resident Advisor. It is also the only country in which the Resident Advisor was not hired and chosen by IREX. Instead an organization, Center For Independent Journalism (CIJ), with goals and abilities compatible with those of the ProMedia program was selected and the head of CIJ Hungary became by default the ProMedia Resident Advisor. Choosing an implementing organization instead of setting up its own operations has worked well in Hungary.
- Employment of a local Resident Advisor brought several important advantages including lower overhead, smaller salary, and thorough knowledge of the country and the region.
- Overall responses to ProMedia workshops have been positive. Questionnaires reviewed by the evaluation team indicate a high rate of approval. This is true both for technical and management and marketing training.
- The CIJ conducts workshops and seminars in smaller cities throughout Hungary. This makes possible a larger participation than if programs were offered only in Budapest.
- For the local TV stations, the main obstacles to more independence are: a complicated licensing procedure; too many local TV stations; local government ownership and dependence on local government subsidies; inadequate professional and management skills.
- The situation with the radio stations is different. The Association of Independent Radio Stations is functioning well. But stations also need professional programming and managerial skills, as do local newspapers.
- The CIJ and ProMedia Roma minority press program in Hungary is innovative and obviously successful, and contributes to a more pluralistic mainstream media.
- USAID Budapest has been monitoring CIJ to make sure that it can continue functioning after USAID funding ends in 1999.

Preliminary Issues

- Running ProMedia through CIJ in Hungary has definitely been advantageous, but not without costs. It has meant narrowing of the program primarily to training, something that CIJ does well and would do with or without ProMedia support. However, other areas of intervention have not even been attempted in Hungary.
- The importance of the personality factor surfaced repeatedly during the evaluation. This or that

part of the ProMedia program works because of the resident adviser's personality, or because the people involved in decision-making or monitoring work well together. The human/personality aspect must be factored in and adjusted for if optimal results are to be reached.

- Little progress was made in association building simply because potential organizers are not ready for assistance. Television stations managers, however, seem aware of the importance of pooling their resources and collaborating on programming and management. At some point, ProMedia may be able to encourage associations.
- As can be seen on the example of the nearby Czech republic, minority issues can indeed become serious democracy issues. It is this issue for otherwise democratically developed country that is considered to be the most serious democratic shortcoming standing in the way of the acceptance of the Czech Republic into European Union.

SLOVAKIAN PROGRAM

Country Context

Prior to 1989 all TV, radio and press were controlled by the Communist party. Since the Velvet Revolution, a large number of radio, TV and print media have begun operations. There are roughly 20 private radio stations, three national and more than 50 local TV stations and a dozen daily newspapers. To some indeterminate extent, print media are owned or closely connected to groups with strong partisan convictions.

While the media industry has grown dramatically, there is broad consensus on the need for greater professionalism, strengthening of advocacy and professional associations, improved management, marketing and business skills and better access to potential advertising revenue.

There is considerable direct and indirect political and economic governmental pressure on the media. This is maintained through a licensing system managed by a Licensing Council whose members are appointed by the Parliament, a near monopolistic state-run press agency, public TV and radio which has, for the past four years, acted more as a state institution than a public one and printing and distribution company with very close ties to government.

Although there are several media associations to advocate for and protect journalists and media organizations, they need experience and financial support. Despite repeated attempts at modification, the 1966 Law on Mass Media Communications imposes considerable constraints on press freedom and the rights of journalists. There have been isolated but disturbing incidents of direct press intimidation and several instances of physical abuse.

Program Description

The ProMedia program had a slow and difficult start. Lack of momentum, an excessively theoretical initial implementation plan and substantive differences with respect to program content culminated in a decision by IREX and the USAID Mission to radically redesign the program and install new management.

The transition was effected in 1997 with dramatic positive results. A new resident adviser brought a practical, operational approach and a broad variety of useful and imaginative interventions was quickly identified and funded.

The current program emphasizes: provision of equipment to radio stations; market research and consultations to increase advertising revenue; internships; media monitoring; strengthening professional media associations; the preparation of a media law handbook to help protect the rights of journalists; TV production, broadcast training and internships to increase the quality of broadcast media; training in economics and business reporting; establishment of a technical equipment template for local TV stations; and the design and creation of a media web-site.

In addition, the program has provided, through the Washington law firm of Covington and Burling, analysis of the media law and other statutes related to the role and operation of the media industry.

The ProMedia program is scheduled to terminate in September 1999, although funds may be depleted prior to that date. Neither the USAID mission nor the American embassy indicated an inclination to continue the program beyond next year.

Preliminary Findings

- There is broad consensus that program is very well managed and appropriately targeted on issues and constraints to the media that are of primary importance.
- The switch to a field driven approach was absolutely correct move. The dynamic nature of the Slovakian situation (and the difficult relations with the USAID mission) would have made Washington management unfeasible.
- A slow start up, the consequent transition difficulties and the inflexibility of the phase out date for USAID assistance have necessitated a target of opportunity approach. At the same time and in retrospect, a more clearly focused program might have had longer and deeper benefits.
- Communications between USAID and ProMedia in Slovakia and with Washington are open, substantive and constructive. The overall Washington/field management structure is burdensome and time consuming but has not significantly impeded program operations.
- Reporting requirements are viewed as heavy but not unreasonable although there is considerable frustration at the slowness of the budget process.
- Embassy involvement in program operations has been both extensive and at the same time appropriate and reasonable in view of country conditions.
- US Government support of independent media institutions has by and large not been perceived as an inappropriate intervention by the Slovaks or by Slovak media institutions. However, the issue of journalistic independence has been significantly controversial with respect to relations with US media institutions and was at least in part at the center of the difficult start-up problems faced in Slovakia.

- Emphasis on local media and on basic business skills as opposed to broad journalistic skills is the right emphasis. If anything, evaluation team would, in retrospect, have recommended a tighter concentration of resources around these guiding themes.

Preliminary Issues

- The absence of a top down program strategy and a comprehensive assessment of country conditions does not seem to have undercut effectiveness. An experience and hands on media professional was able to implement an effective program quickly and imaginatively.
- The difficult state of the media, national elections, the fluid and quickly changing nature of the media industry and the short time between program start and end argues for a target of opportunity approach. A different context would have encouraged greater emphasis on sustainability. In retrospect, increased priority could have been given to building and strengthening professional media associations.
- A more deliberately focused program might have had greater cumulative impact by concentrating sustained resources on (for example) capacity building of media associations. At the same time, a program of this sort would have required more time and would have been less responsive to imminent issues faced in Slovakia
- There appears to be little direct coordination with Freedom House and little if any knowledge of the Freedom House intern or AVID programs. This is surprising in light of the fact that the Slovak program does support some modest degree of out-of-country training.

ATTACHMENT #2

COUNTRY ACTIVITIES — PROFESSIONAL MEDIA PROGRAM SLOVAKIA * ROMANIA * UKRAINE * HUNGARY * CROATIA

NOTE: The following is drawn from field reports on recent activities to provide a sampling of fieldwork. It is not meant to be a complete description of the work.

SLOVAKIA

TELEVISION AND RADIO

Worked with independent radio stations regarding application for a loan for a transmitter and renovation of studios and office space * Consulted with three radio stations on marketing and programming * Helped develop research on radio market shares * Provided training to 13 regional television stations in production and management * Participated in hosting competition among six television stations on best public affairs reporting * Negotiated with independent news service to provide radio wire to 22 independent radio stations.

MEDIA LAW

Cooperated with Washington law firm Covington and Burling on analysis of segments of Slovak media law * Published handbooks on Slovak media rights and responsibilities under existing laws.

JOURNALIST TRAINING

Arranged week-long study tour in the United States for three Slovak journalism association leaders * Set up two-week study tour in the United States concerning broadcast association management for three Slovak journalists involved in associations * Organized two week study tour in the United States for five Slovak radio station broadcasters.

MEDIA MONITORING

Assisted Slovak Syndicate of Journalists in media monitoring project.

ROMANIA

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Organized trip by American specialist to two regional daily newspapers to advise on marketing, business practices and circulation auditing * Published booklet for newspapers on marketing, advertising, circulation and basic management * Order printing of 500 additional copies of successful publication on Romanian media marketing and sales* Organized lectures by an American specialist on media business issues * Arranged seminar for 32 participants on advertising design and retailing.

JOURNALIST TRAINING

Organized 10 week study tour in the United States for three Romanian media managers, one in a series of such study trips * Arranged study tour for five Romania economics and business reporters to Warsaw and Budapest * Helped organized first annual award for best young Romanian journalist.

NEWSPAPER AUDIT BUREAU

Worked with newspapers and other organizations to set up and conduct first Romanian Audit Bureau of Circulation.

TELEVISION AND RADIO

Arranged training by American specialist at two independent television stations on news programming * Purchased digital television camera and arranged training for nearly 100 camerapersons.

UKRAINE

PRESS CENTER

Continued to develop resources and training programs at year-old regional Center for Independent Journalists in Simferopol * Hosted increasing numbers of journalists at Kiev Center.

JOURNALIST TRAINING

Hosted workshops in Kiev and elsewhere for staff members of regional newspapers on legal issues, reporting and Internet publishing and advertising * Helped organize roundtable discussions in seven Ukrainian cities concerning news coverage of elections * Advised Dnepropetrovsk University Faculty of Journalism on curriculum revision and establishment of a student newspaper * Arranged study tour in Moscow for Romanian newspaper journalist * Organized study tour in Moscow for seven members of the new Media Defense Lawyers Association.

MEDIA LAW

Helped form an association of media defense lawyers.

HUNGARY

TELEVISION AND RADIO

Held follow-up sessions for 24 journalists from 10 stations to radio news documentary production workshops.

JOURNALIST TRAINING

Organized week long training for 30 journalists from 16 local television stations on election news reporting * Co-hosted seminars on covering minority issues * Cooperated with other foreign organizations in training of nine interns at mainstream Hungarian media over 11 month period * Organized two day workshop with American specialists on reporting community events * Hosted workshop for 17 Hungarian newspaper photographers.

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Organized business management training sessions by British specialist on sales and advertising for more than one dozen radio stations * Arranged seminars in Budapest and on-site training for regional newspapers by two American specialists on marketing, advertising and budgeting.

CROATIA

TELEVISION AND RADIO

Continued support of Association of Small Radio Stations * Organized on-site counseling by American specialists for five regional radio stations in business management, advertising and marketing.

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Organized meetings between independent media with the largest advertising agencies in Croatia* Continued planning for study tour in the United States for eight media managers.

MEDIA LAW

Continued work on list of Croat media lawyers to assist journalists sued for libel * Worked with Soros foundation on Legal Defense Center.

JOURNALIST TRAINING

Organized for workshops for 42 journalists and American journalists on reporting, computers, ethical questions and journalism education.

Attachment # 3

SCOPE OF WORK

Attachment # 4

EVALUATION OF USAID'S PROFESSIONAL MEDIA PROGRAM INTERVIEW GUIDELINE

The following questions are designed to provide a general guideline for conducting interviews and discussions related to the evaluation of the Professional Media Program. The questions are suggestive and are not designed to be comprehensive. It is not intended that all questions be covered at every interview. In some cases, the questions are redundant in order to approach an issue from an alternative perspective. The questions should not in any way imply a conclusion; additional questions may be inserted as the evaluation progresses.

In an effort to prioritize, key questions are shown in bold face.

DESIGN AND STRATEGY

1. **Is overall program design “strategic”? I.e. is it based on and derived from an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of media institutions in each country?**
2. **Does program design (and implementation) take adequate account of enabling and/or inhibiting in-country conditions?**
3. **Has the program found the right balance between being “field driven” on the one hand while maintaining overall strategic coherence on the other?**
4. Have country needs assessments been useful in the formulation of individual country programs?
5. Has the program found an appropriate balance between responding to “targets of opportunity” while sticking to long term strategic goals?
6. Is program design and strategy evolving as conditions change? (Have program managers put in place an effective feedback system to learn from accumulated experience?)
7. Do program managers give adequate attention to strategic redesign? (Is adequate time set aside for periodic strategic assessments?)
8. **To what extent has the program been able to articulate a guiding set of core principles (or philosophy) to give it identity and augment impact?**
9. Do staff of IREX, partner organizations and participants have a clear, common and consistent understanding of program purpose and strategy?
10. Is the goal and purpose structure (objective tree) well conceived, understandable and fundamentally compelling?

11. Are program managers incorporating an adequate emphasis on sustainability and developing effective exit strategies in countries where phase out is imminent?
12. Is the program taking advantage of opportunities for replication and broadened impact?

PROGRAM APPROACH/CONTENT

1. **Are individual program components (modalities) effective and appropriate to the needs of participating countries?**
2. Has the program been able to effectively balance between strengthening and professionalizing the media on the one hand and strengthening an awareness of “First amendment” principles and protections on the other?
3. Within country, is the activity scope appropriate — too broad, too narrow? Should the menu of 6 modalities be changed?
4. Is the balance between central or capital city programs and regional programs appropriate country by country?
5. Does IREX have adequate internal technical capacity to provide program guidance and evaluate program content?
6. Are existing local resources being adequately exploited and integrated with AID funded IREX resources? e.g. indigenous/expatriate media and democracy building NGOs and alumni of previous training.
7. What training interventions are most effective?
Satisfaction of those trained.
Unit cost of training.
Long term impact — sustainability.
Structural as opposed to individual benefit.
8. What efforts have been made to institutionalize the provision of training?

MANAGEMENT

1. **Have program managers been able to design a management structure that balances between the needs and priorities of a results driven government program on the one hand and the distinctive values of an independent media on the other?**
2. **Is the management structure consistent with achievement of program goals and objectives?**
3. Does the management structure adequately balance between the need for adaptation and responsiveness on the one hand and oversight and compliance on the other?

4. Is the role and function of the Resident Advisor clear and broadly understood? (Is the nationality of the Resident Advisor pertinent in the selection of these individuals?)
5. Are roles and functions of the four managing partners clear and adequately internalized? (IREX/Washington, IREX/field, AID/ Washington, AID/field).
6. Has an effective and efficient communications process been designed and installed?
7. **Is there open and constructive communication and collaboration among the implementing partners with respect to objectives, strategy, program priorities and implementation issues?**
8. **Is the level of USAID oversight and involvement appropriate? Have USAID and IREX been able to establish communications structures to address and resolve alternative perspectives?**
9. Has IREX constructively integrated USAID terminology and programming process into program implementation?
10. Does the resource allocation process effectively balance between local needs and priorities and larger program objectives?
11. Do resident advisors receive adequate support from the home office organization?
12. Are staffing levels appropriate in the context of current workloads.

MONITORING

1. **Has USAID's performance management process been a constructive benefit to program design, management and implementation or a bureaucratic burden?**
2. Have program managers been able to construct performance indicators that meet established criteria of cost effectiveness, management utility, reliability and relevance?
3. Is the reporting and monitoring burden appropriate for this type of program and at this stage of Project evolution?
4. Is there an established mechanism for analyzing performance data and adjusting program content and approach accordingly?

ATTACHMENT # 5

LIST OF INDIVIDUALS INTERVIEWED

UNITED STATES

State Department, Washington

Thomas C. Adams, Deputy Coordinator for East European Assistance

USAID, Washington

Tom Nicastro, Chief of Democracy and Governance

Mary Ann Riegelman, Program Officer

Peter Graves, Senior Media Adviser

Kirsten Michener, Media Specialist

Roberto Figueredo, Bucharest

IREX/PROMEDIA, Washington

Mark Pomar, Director of the Professional Media Program

Nancy Hedin, Assistant Director

Mark Whitehouse, Senior Program Officer

Linda Trail, Program Officer

LeeAnn Williams-Maley, Program Officer

Peter Baldwin, Budget Analyst

Michelle Marcoot, Program Associate

Tom Deters, Program Associate

Cheryl Schoenberg, Program Associate

Gene Mater, Senior Media Consultant

Freedom House, Washington

James Denton, Executive Director

Paula Gibbons, Director of Exchange Programs

Kathryn Koegel, Senior Media Advisor

Other, Washington

Kurt Wimmer, Attorney, Covington and Burling

Jimmy Greenfield, Independent Journalism Foundation

SLOVAKIA

USAID, Slovakia

Kathy L. Stermer, Project Adviser

Maria E. Mamlouk, Program Officer

Paula Goddard, Program Officer

Zdeno Cho, Media Adviser

PROMEDIA, Slovakia

Rich McClear, Resident Adviser
Suzi McClear, Training Coordinator
Serge Koperdak, Deputy Adviser
Martina Skockova, Program Assistant
Jana Martinkova, Program Associate

CIJ, Slovakia

Katarina Vajdova, Director

Other, Slovakia

Lubomir Fifik, President, Union of Slovak Television
Igor Ludma, Director of Marketing, Radio Tatry
Zuzana Sucha, Editor, Radio Tatry
Samuel Vetrak, Director of Marketing, Radio Lumen
Stefan Bohunicky, Audio Engineer, ProMedia Trainer
Iveta Istokova, TV Director, ProMedia Trainer
Bohumil Miko, Managing Director, Banovce Cultural Center
Vladimir Laluch, Editor, , TV Turiec,
Magdazlena Zgancikova, Marketing Director, Beta Radio (Bojnice)
Edward J. Baumeister, Senior Media Consultant, ProMedia

HUNGARY

USAID, Budapest, Hungary

Klara Vizer, Project Director

CIJ, Hungary

Sandor Orban, Director
Ilona Moricz, Deputy Director

Other, Hungary

Mark Milstein, Trainer, Photojournalism Course
Laszlo Kondor, Trainer, Photojournalism Course
Balasz Zachar, Editor, Media, *Kabel Muhold*
Janos Horvath, Managing Director, Centro Film
Laszlo Szudar, Director, Csaba TV
Gabor Bernath, Director, Roma Press Center
David Olah, International Coordinator, Roma Press Center

ROMANIA

USAID, Bucharest, Romania

Peter Lapera, Director
Ruxandra Datcu, Project Management Assistant
Scott Johnson, Governance Project

USIS, Romania

Stephen Strain, Public Affairs Officer
Thomas Mesa, Press and Information Officer

Freedom House/PROMEDIA, Romania

Cristina Guseth, Director
Gabriela, Gruia, Program Officer

Other, Romania

Dan Balotescu, Deputy Director, Initiative Media
Serban Ciusca, Executive Director, Initiative Media
Nicu Cojocaru, Marketing and Advertising Manager, *Adevarul*
Gabriel Constantinescu, Chief, Economic Department, *Adevarul*
Mircea Contras, Editor, *Adevarul*
Dana Cristescu, Chief, Advertising Department *Adevarul*
Boni Cucu, Senior Economist, Ministry of Finance
Simona David, Correspondent, *Adevarul*
Doina doru, Producer, Romania TV
Rodin Dragoescu, Journalism Student, Universitatea de Vest
Cozmin Guse, Affiliates Director, Antennae 1 TV
Corina Ilie, Chief of Advertising and Marketing, Evenimentul Zilei
Nadia Ionescu, Director of Press Relations, Parliament of Romania
Lucian Ionica, Faculty of Journalism, Universitatea de Vest
Silviu Ispas, Executive Director, Romanian Audit Bureau of Circulation
Andi Lazescu, President, Nord Est Media
Alexander Lazescu, President, *Monitorul*
Mioara Manaila, Chief of Advertising, *Viata Libzera-Galati*
Liviu Moraru, Chief of Printing Division, Pro Publications
Rzvan Nicolescu, Economics Editor, Romania TV
Cornel Nistorescu, Director, *Evenimentul Zilei*
Dan-Gabriel Olsteanu, Director General, *Monitorul*
Daniela Oprea, Journalism Student, Universitatea de Vest
Florin Pasnicu, Executive Director, Center for Independent Journalism
Nikola Pavicevic, Director of Production, Intact Advertising
Vlad Petreana, News Co-Anchor, Antennae 1 TV
Doru Petrescu, Director, Artecno Publications
Adrian Pop, Editor, *Renasterea Banateana*
Oana Raluca-Gaga, Journalism Student, Universitatea de Vest
George Serban, Member of Parliament
Cristina Simion, Chief of Marketing, Romanis Publishing
Alessandra Stoicescu, News Co-Anchor, Antennae 1 TV
Camelia Suciu, Marketing and Advertising Director, Macri Press Group
Sorin Tapai, Editor, *Evenimentul Zilei*
Alin Teodorescu, President, Marketing and Polling Institute
Mircea Toma, Deputy Editor, *Evenimentul Zilei*
Armina Vlaicu, Public Relations Assistant, Saatchi & Saatchi

UKRAINE

USAID, Ukraine

David Black, Officer for Democratic and Social Transition

USIS, Ukraine

Mary Kruger, Public Affairs Officer

PROMEDIA, Ukraine

Tim O'Connor, Resident Adviser

Gena Potchtar, Officer Director

Valentina Grigorian, Head Librarian

Katya Laba, Training Coordinator

Tanya Kudritska, Program Assistant

Oleg Khomenok, Officer Director (Simferopol)

Other, Ukraine

Serge Atamanov, Deputy Editor, *Novoye Vremya*

Lilia Budzhurova, Director, Crimean Association of Independent Journalists

Vladimir Devchenko, Dean, Journalism Faculty, Dnepropetrovsk University

Tereza Dordea, Editor, *National*

Aider Emirov, Deputy Editor, *Golos Kryma*

Tara Kuzmov, Deputy Director, Internews

Elena Lankovskya, Advertising Director, *Novoye Vremya*

Alexander Martynenko, Deputy Head of Administration, Office of the Ukrainian President

Volodimir Mostovov, Editor, *Zerkalo Nedeli*

Mary Mycio, Correspondent, *Los Angeles Times*

Natalia Petrova, Attorney

Natalia Podzharova, Chief of News, *Ogni Mayaka*

Irina Polyakova, Bureau Chief, European Media Institute

Elena Pritula, Correspondent, Interfax Ukraine

Tyatana Savvina, Attorney, *Sevodnya*

Nikola Semena, Director, Renaissance Fund

Eldar Sentbekirov, Editor, *Golos Kryma*

Natalia Shtanko, Journalism Faculty, Dnepropetrovsk University

Nancy Splain, Director, American Bar Association/Eastern Europe Law Institute

Larisa Troyna, Correspondent, Ukraine TV

Avlyaziz Veliev, Deputy Editor, *Novyi Mir*

Ivan Yachenko, Editor, *Novyi Mir*

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